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DELICATE

CRIMES.

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DELICATE CRIMES.

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS.

A. E pur in tanto

E sì grave fallir contro la legge

Non ho peccato, ed Innocente sono:

N. Contro la legge, di natura forse

Honhai, Ninfa peccato: ama se piace.

Ma ben hai tu peccato in contro quella

Degli uomini, e del ciel: ama se lice.

GUERINI IL PASTOR FIDO.

VOLUME FIRST.

L O N D O N :

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MDCCLXXVII.

DELICATE CRIMES.

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS.

By E. J. M. M. M.

It is a grave fault, and the fault

is a grave fault, and the fault

is a grave fault, and the fault

is a grave fault, and the fault



AN EIGHT VOLUME FIRST

PRINTED BY

DELICATE CRIMES.

LETTER I.

From Mademoiselle HAMILTON, to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

YOU asked me yesterday, what was the occasion of my sadness, and whether I had any cause to complain of you ; how could you think of such a question ? You know I am naturally serious. An early acquaintance with misfortune has given my features that expression, which is always involuntary, signifies nothing, and on which you are not permitted to put a perverse interpretation. If once I am sad in your company, all will

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be

be over with me; for have I another happiness, another pleasure? Is it not that alone which attaches me to life? Your passion is more feeble than mine, if you doubt mine. Have I any cause to complain of you? Talk to me no more I beseech you in that strain; do you suppose me weak enough to forge torments for myself, by groundless suspicions; and have you given me any cause?

Heaven seems to have formed me for suffering; and if Nature has endowed me with some courage, it has only been to exercise that courage by misfortune. Driven into exile before I was capable of knowing a country, I saw my unhappy father, a prey to grief and disappointment, finish his days in a strange one; not only pursued by the malice of his enemies, but neglected by those to whom he had been a friend, and by following whose fortunes, he had forfeited his own. His afflictions broke his heart, and my first tears were shed upon his grave.

I had still my mother, a mother tenderly
beloved,

beloved, who mingled her sorrows with mine. I have since been deprived of her; you were witness of my loss: she united us with her last breath; and none I have in this world but you. Thus our nuptial torch was lighted at the funeral pile, and a sacred nuptial let me call it; though unconfirmed by the laws, and unsanctified by the pomp of altars, yet never will I blush for that graceful weakness. The rights I have given you upon my heart, never will add a false weight to those petty formalities, which keep down vulgar minds; and even in your arms, I dare call the Power Supreme to witness my innocence; and make an offering to him of our happiness as a proof of my virtue.

Fear not then, that I shall importune you with a teasing fondness, swollen by captiousness and impatience, humiliating and painful for us both. I am yours, you dispose of me to my last moment; I cherish my inclination, I am fixed by it for ever; and I desire that you may have no other tie but yours. I would have a re-

membrance of me mix itself with all your actions, but be an obstacle to nothing you have a mind to do.

My security is in my heart; it is the fruit of my esteem. Could I suspect you an instant, that instant alone would be sufficient to empoison the whole course of my life. The calm I enjoy, is but the rest of a profound sensibility; was a storm to succeed, it would be frightful.

O my friend, what barbarian would take pains to destroy the charm of his beneficence! You have created for me a new world; you have placed me in it where you pleased; I remain where you have placed me, and regret nothing. This garden, the flowers in it which I cultivate, those arbors, whose shade hides us from all eyes, are my treasures; I am above a wish for any other: in short, I disdain every thing that is not you. My solitude enchants me; your presence brings ten thousand pleasures along with it; in your absence, your image continually recurring to my fancy, replaces them

them by something little short of reality. It brings upon my lips the smile of happiness; it consecrates every hour of the day, and occupies my dreams by night, to render my waking more chearful. I rejoice that I have known you, that I love you, that I exist but for you; that I live at the gates of Paris, a stranger to its tumults. Would you change into eternal mourning the felicity I owe you; would you drown in tears, the eyes you fill with love?

No! I never have had, I never shall have such a cruelty to reproach you with; I am too proud to fear a rival: after all, what woman can deserve to take you from me? Adieu. I expect you at your return from Fountainbleau. I am reading Clarissa again for the third time, the unfortunate ———.

P. S. But now I think of it, why have you been longer absent from me than usual, while we are such near neighbours? A whole day, and the greater part of another! I know not how to have done talking to you, how to quit you. Farewell.

LETTER II.

From the Duke de CLERMONT, to the
Marchioness de SYRIE.

DURING the last fifteen days, Madam, I have made many profound reflections. Your conduct towards me, the unabated rigor with which you have repaid a passion the most decided, and a constancy, proof against all temptation, might leave in my heart a secret malignity, and make resentment succeed to a more tender feeling; but nothing of all this has happened. You have, I know not what in your character, that disarms mine; in a word, my resolution is taken; I will immolate my passion to your caprice, your reason, if you like better to call it so; and since you profess such a stoical antipathy to the transports of love, I am content to reduce myself to the lukewarm feelings of friendship.

It

It is the first time that I have accepted so modest a portion with a woman of your age, and attractions; the sacrifice is painful; but no matter, I submit to it; and this species of homage ought to appear the more delicate to you, as I am a man of the world, who have a lively sense of the bitterness of all privations. Behold me then from this moment your friend, the singular title! You may, perhaps, find me for the first few days a little awkward; a part we have never played before, startles us in the beginning; but one comes to it with time, and I dare say, we shall not have practised above ten or twelve years, before I am a tolerable master of the business. Be thankful then, allow that you have got off very well, and that I am not by half so dangerous a fellow as some women would have me thought; those that doubt, need but ask you, to be disabused; you will stand up for me, won't you? and clear me of a haughty reputation, which I so little deserve?

Well, have you still an ill opinion of

me, and will you still inhumanly refuse to place that confidence in me, which I so justly lay claim to? I pay sufficiently dear for it, to be a little jealous of the purchase. I have taken it into my head that a man, in order to resemble something with a woman, must either have her heart, or her secret; and I am not afraid of being taxed with presumption, when, contenting myself with the latter mark of your kind disposition, I desire only to be received in the humble capacity of your confidant.

For look ye, Madam, I'll deal sincerely with you; women (all this is only general, and in the rotine of philosophy) are seldom capable of that disinterested heroism, that ferocious courage, which resists and puts itself in a passion, with endeavours to please: such gigantic efforts are not proportionable to their strength. Their virtue requires a leaning-stock, and when they make a resolute defence against a man, that knows how to attack them, it is usually supposed they have a foible for
some

some other, which gives them force to vanquish, and lends them arms, the honour of which is ascribed to their principles.

Now, Madam, though these are my doubts rather than my opinion, if you have made a choice to the prejudice of my passion, what can be an impediment to the union truly celestial of our souls, to the innocence of our Platonic communications? A woman may, nay she ought to dissemble with a lover; it is a part of the policy of the sex, as ancient as it is respectable; but a friend, (how I adore the charming idea!) possesses a breast open on all sides; he is admitted into the secrets of the back-thoughts; he gets at the truth through the complication of motives, the assumed dignity of outward behaviour, and all the reserves of coquetry.

You may rely on my discretion; all I should have had as a preferred lover, I offer you by another title; notwithstanding the dryness of the character, and the difference of the honour that attends it.

Surely the mortal you are pleased to distinguish, is worthy of envy; yet the more I examine the circle of your acquaintance, the less able am I to determine on whom to fix my suspicions. I hardly cast a thought upon the great Colonel. You can never have been touched by his cavalier figure, his absurd prodigality, which he calls expence; his beastly familiarity, his burlesque importance, and his profound erudition upon the epoca of *etiquettes*. For the little Prince *de Soan*, he has youth, a fine complexion, and that silly *naiveté*, which in men sometimes degenerates into sentiment; then he is endowed with an impediment in his speech, altogether gracious and agreeable, and sometimes, no more is necessary to determine the *panchant* of a fair lady. A man that stammers appears to have always about him the disorder that distinguishes love; and the little Prince, though he takes an hour to get out a phrase, may arrive at a certain eloquence of situation,

sufficient

sufficient to make amends for every other imperfection.

I make no mention of the Count de St. ALBIN; I even refused formerly to present him at your house. I never charge myself with such offices; I am not a stranger to the complaints and reproaches one is exposed to, by meddling with such sort of young men; and if you are already dissatisfied with him, I am at least free from the remorse of having brought you acquainted; not but he possesses great advantages, a thousand agreeable and even good qualities; but notwithstanding so many circumstances in his favour, I much doubt if he pleases you. The man of all the women, is hardly the person your heart requires; I know you better than you think, and I applaud most sincerely your laudable disposition.

My dear Marchioness, I devoutly kiss your hands. I hope soon to pay my court to you, and that we shall begin together the grave functions of my new employment.

LETTER III.

From the Marchioness de SYRIE, to the
Duke de CLERMONT.

UPON my word, Monsieur le Duc, your epistle has diverted me prodigiously; but why not in your own hand? Without your running footman, I should have been at a loss for the writer, and could only have guessed at you by the lightness of your rattle; but above all, by your extraordinary discretion. Confess the truth, you were afraid by writing to me yourself, to leave in my possession a title, which would depose against you in favour of my conduct; but, Heaven be praised, you know as little of my heart, as you do of my character. My prudence is sufficiently strong of itself, and I have no need of foreign arms to defend it. Do, and say just what you please, I pardon you before-hand, and you need not fear my attempting my justification.

But

DELICATE CRIMES.

But to return to your style ; once more let me assure you, it is for that I particularly admire you. You are nobody, less than nothing when you talk of love. You are awkward through a superlative degree of address ; and I must own, too studied for me. The true science of a man in love, is to shew that he really feels what he says ; to hide nothing, to feign nothing, to abandon himself to the natural course of his passion, and paint without art, the sentiments that engross him. An abundance of words will never supply the barrenness of the heart ; and while no emotion gains upon us, we are always armed against the project. Believe me, a sigh, a moment of expressive silence is more powerful than all the vain pedantry of gallantry, which can never seduce any woman, but such as are not worth the trouble of seducing. All your amorous phrases, are but the recollections of a cultivated wit ; and I am rejoiced to see you at last give way to your natural talent. You are sublime in irony ; nay, you must
be

be so, since I, who am the subject of yours, confess your superiority in that interesting species of elocution.

There is but one thing for which I am angry with you ; that you have not wrapt up in expressions yet more adroit, the secret pique that torments you, but really now, here are you absolutely furious, because I have had sense enough not to credit a passion which you never felt ; and because I have robbed you of the pleasure of deceiving me ; why to be sure, that cries vengeance, and after such a horrid offence, I wonder you can have the imbecility to offer me your friendship. You my friend ! You, the friend of a woman, who is but twenty years old, and generally counted passable ! Only reflect a moment upon the consequences of such an humble resignation ; besides I am unfortunate enough to have no secrets to trust you with. Take care, after having been a lover without consequence, you run the risk of being a friend without employment, two disgraces at a time. You will
finish

finish by hating me to death, and then how shall I console myself?

I am prepared for your incredulity. I know it will be difficult to persuade you that a woman of my age, carried by the whirlwind in which I live, should have no need of an indulgent confidant. You have hitherto met with none but women with secrets, and there are certainly those who have a great many to tell, and yet more to hide; but permit me to represent to you, that it is unjust to condemn all my sex as guilty, on account of some delinquents. You men of brilliant adventures, are strange creatures; because half a dozen lunatics, who know no restraint, and who without decency are tender by instinct, and libertines from habitude, because such sort of women take you, quit you, and retake you, to quit you again; because the notoriety of your infidelities, and their disorders have given them up to infamy, which they have the front to brave, you would comprehend the whole in those opprobrious exceptions.

Take

Take it from me, Monsieur le Duc, and remember it if you can, there are yet women whose charms deserve your admiration, and their manners your esteem. Some combat their inclinations, and triumph over them; others less courageous, and born with a greater degree of sensibility, know how to make even their weaknesses respectable, are able to render love an immaculate sentiment, and never lose that secret modesty of soul, that delicate shame, which even in straying from her paths, seems continually to return them back to virtue.

But, good God! what have I done? Forgive me, I beseech you; I am afraid I have attempted to reason with you. You certainly did not expect it; and I protest to you nothing was farther from my thoughts. Adieu, Monsieur le Duc; you are really more susceptible of friendship than one would suppose; however, I desire but one proof of it; have a little more consideration, for the persons that compose my society. Between you and me,
we

we seldom derive much credit from a spirit of satyr. Though giddy and inconstant in appearance, I am not less firm in my attachments to those with whom I live; and I shall pardon for the future your ingenious sarcasms, upon no other condition, than that they are solely confined to me. I have the vanity to think myself able to answer them, though I cannot say the same with regard to your love. Many women in my place, would not write to you. I know it; but what will you have? the whim struck me, and I believe I may give the rein to my fancy without much danger.

A B I L L E T

From the Duke de CLERMONT, to
Monsieur Le BLANC.

WELL, Monsieur Le Blanc, how goes on the expedition, of which I have put you at the head? Are your
Griffons

Griffons already in the field? Shall we succeed in carrying the charming English woman? endeavour to get intelligence from without, from within; post your centinels, pay your spies, corrupt the footmen, employ with the chamber-maids all that seduction of which you are so perfect a master. Scatter gold by handfuls; you shan't want it; these are the circumstances in which we ought to be prodigal, and you know I am not ungrateful to those who serve me; above all things, take care not to mention your employer. If the affair comes to nothing, I would not have the scandal of a repulse. Name neither St. Albin, nor me. You grow old, Mr. Rascal, you have no longer that briskness, that active impudence, that signalized your early exploits; you sleep upon your laurels, and I heard yesterday a horrible story of you. They pretend that you begin to have remorse? What the Devil have you got in your head? However, terminate my affairs, and afterwards be as conscientious as you will. I have need of
your

your intrepidity, and I hire it at a price that may well engage you to put off your repentance to a longer day. It is never too late to mend. You know I want to hear from you, and be sure you serve me better now, than you did with the little dancer. Was it not for your damn'd laziness, I should have had her three weeks sooner. Zeal, firrah, zeal! This adventure may do you infinite service; and I shall see by your management of it, whether you are yet capable of emulation, and sensible to glory.

L E T T E R IV.

From the Duke de CLERMONT to the
Count de St. ALBIN.

MY little cousin, I sought for you yesterday in vain, in at least twenty houses; I dropt in at the opera; you were no where to be found, and as in my rounds I did not meet the Marchioness either; I
took

took it for granted that you were together, settling preliminaries. Endeavour to abridge them as much as you can, and don't fix yourself to the eternal monotony of the same attitude. It is a fine thing to be happy, but remember there is such a thing as variety; it is the female device, and should be ours.

Recollect what I have so often said to you, accelerate slow conquests, hold off a little with those that promise to be too rapid. A constant degree of impatience will agree very well with your age, delicacy in the proposal, and promptitude in the action; 'tis the whole art of love at three-and-twenty.

I have thought of your English woman a good deal. I see that connexion is nothing but a *goût*, attracted by habitude; it ought to be irksome to you, and take my advice, think seriously of a rupture. An intrigue of such a nature may injure your advancement, will contradict your rising inclinations, and interrupt you in twenty adventures; each more *picquant* than the other;

other; besides that, it will give you among the women a varnish of fidelity that will make them have you in-aversion.

If you are unwilling to leave her abruptly (and you have what is called a tender weakness) begin to be less frequent in your visits, prepare her for it: if you dare not, take your leave at once; and draw your neck out of the collar by degrees. In fine, get rid of your English mistress, was it only from national zeal, and a spirit of patriotism. What sort of engagements can you have with her? I know of no ties with women, but the tie of pleasure; and we cease to be held when we are no longer pleased. Profit I beg of you, of so salutary a doctrine.

I go to-morrow to St. Hubert's*; if you mean me an answer, order your people to bring it by times in the morning. You need not be afraid of disturbing me. I have broke with my theatrical Statira,

* One of the king of France's pleasure-houses.

and

and given her up to the Marquis de Mirbille, who has lately won a thousand guineas at Vingtoun. I rid myself of a trouble, and do them both a service. Once more have done with your Englishwoman, and rely on my friendship.

LETTER V.

From Monsieur Le BLANC, to the Duke
De CLERMONT.

HONOURED SIR,

I DARE not appear before you, I have already made use of all the stratagems my art affords, without being able to put our affairs in a better posture. The residence of the English lady is a species of fort, inaccessible to all the manœuvres of war. The footman speaks no French, the two maids are honest; in short, all is virtue about her house, where there is not even water to drink. To add to the misfortune, they have got in the court a great
English

English mastiff, who has taken a particular dislike to my emissaries. He went well near tearing one of them to pieces last week, who I sent thither in disguise, to sell wash-balls; one would think the cursed animal smelt out our intentions.

I have already, notwithstanding, distributed almost all the money your Honour put in my hands. It has, indeed, chiefly gone in small expences, and I foresee with sorrow, that we shall be obliged to renounce the grand enterprize; but I hope your Honour will not accuse me of negligence.

As to the people who told you of my remorse, I don't know who they could be; but I'll undertake to say, they were no more my acquaintance than they were my friends. I am a better philosopher than to abandon myself in that manner; and with the assistance of Heaven, I hope to finish as I begun. I have been too much obliged to gentlemen to turn ungrateful to them at last; and if God gives me life, I shall grow grey in a profession which has enriched

enriched so many, and made so many others happy.

I am in these sentiments, and with the most profound respect, &c. &c.

LETTER VI.

From the Duke de CLERMONT to the
Viscount de * * *.

MAKE haste, and tell me, my dear Viscount, how you like the smiling skies of Italy; how you find yourself among those master-pieces of art with which that precious soil is sown, among those monuments of antiquity, which a sensible man of fashion often sees with better eyes than the plodding traveller by profession. Do you regret Paris? our theatres, our *sauppers*, so gay through the force of buffoonery; the corruption of our manners, brought to such perfection; our gallantry so commode; our scandal; the indiscretion of our honest women, and the prudery

dery of our demi-reps? Though still young, I am yet older than you; I have experience, I love you; and before the grand secrets which I am going to trust you with, I will give you a little advice.

I came upon the town almost an infant, but I brought with me an ardent organization, active senses, an immeasurable desire to please, and all the necessaries to succeed. Thanks to those happy dispositions, I have seen all, devoured all, gone to the bottom of all (if the term is not too strong) and by the multiplicity of my sensations, I have acquired a fund of knowledge in a hundred things which is purely my own, which sticks by me, and has no resemblance to those useless materials that pedants pick up in their heavy excursions.

The delicacy of our feelings becomes hard, by the lazy study of the closet; your pretended sages are always a little more blockheads in the morning than they were over-night. As the memory swells, the wit relaxes; and the fire of genius is

extinguished under the ice of learning. They overcharge their heads with dates, facts, grave trifles ; they seize by accident a few truths, encumbered with ten thousand errors ; and in running after the past, they suffer the present to escape them.

My cotemporaries fume ! 'tis with them, 'tis relative to them, we should seek instruction ; all the rest is nothing but chimaera, incertitude and folly. I dwell upon this preamble, that the moral I am about to draw from it, may not too much surprise you.

Frivolous creature as you are, I do not invite you to plunge yourself in meditation, it is neither made for your rank, nor your age ; but I exhort you to see a great deal, and to take an exact view. It will cost you but a little attention, and every glance will enrich your understanding, without robbing you of a moment's dissipation.

Since you are now in Italy, gather (but not with too much labour) those useful
harvests,

harvests, which that brilliant climate so copiously furnishes; once the country of heroes, it became the cradle of the arts, and is still the seat of politics. Don't kiss the Pope's slipper; it is what I shall never forgive you; but get at the root of his power. Learn the manners of the people; above all, those of the good company. Every nation has a stile of life peculiar to itself; and in becoming acquainted with that, people of our order learn all they ought to know. Laugh at the *Monsignori*, and endeavour to debauch their wives; lie with as many of them as you can; to love them is not your end, but to understand them: it is a more essential study than many imagine. The flower of a nation's wit, is in some sort confined to that charming sex, which is always its most interesting moiety.

Your whole art will consist in not requiring more of them than they are able to accomplish. Some fools that adore them, expect them to be constant; a man of sense, who knows too well what they

are, to let his attachment to them go beyond a certain point, leaves them to their natural bias, perceives their caprice only to laugh at it ; and often fixes them, by an affectation not to infringe upon their liberty.

You deceive yourself horribly, my dear Viscount, if you attribute what I here say to you, to a spirit of levity. That levity in appearance, is in reality nothing else than experience under a disguise, that takes off what might render it rough and tiresome. We must fly the world, or laugh at it. I follow the latter party, as the most amusing ; and I give myself up with a good grace to the malignant observations which may be made on my character.

For example, I find myself at present in a very delicate situation ; but I am preparing to draw all the advantages from it, that order and conduct can bring out of circumstances so *bizarre*. Would you believe it, while I write to you, I hardly escape the ridicule of a serious passion? I

was


was the dupe of the poorest management, the martyr of the most manifest coquetry : however, I am become like other men ; and I owe my cure to one of those master-strokes, which changes the disgraces of the heart, into triumphs for the vanity.

The woman who has put me within two fingers breadth of my ruin, is the *pretty* Countess de SYRCE. That epithet of *pretty*, which people are so prodigal of, and applies so ill, seems to have been imagined for her. Nobody was ever more what it means, or had the art of being what it means so continually.

Figure to yourself, a mouth which seems to be but just beginning, with a pair of eyes that have no end ; almost blue, though they are brown, and armed with long ebon lashes, which serve to veil the rays that are constantly streaming from them ; a skin of a dazzling whiteness, and perfectly genuine ; an arm, rounded by the graces ; a foot, to be envied in China ; a figure, that beggars all description, light, elegant, full of softness, and majesty when

necessary. To this victorious out-side, join a wit to say every thing, to understand every thing, to adorn every thing, an *enjouement* that never lets go the hand of decency; a coquetry that makes one mad, and yet delights one; now and then little starts of temper; ravishing teazings; glimmerings of sentiment, and instantaneous fits of melancholy, the more charming, for our not being able to divine their cause; imagination, lively to a degree of magic, which creates her pleasures, where others are not able to find them, and always leads her through a world of enchantment.

She was but fourteen when she married de Syrcè; and at the end of three years, of a fidelity on his part, sufficiently equivocal, (during which she brought him two daughters, and an heir to his estate) he abandoned himself to his taste for those easy fair ones, who are paid, idolized, and despised. Worthy and useful citizens! that pass from hand to hand, amuse the head, make no attempt upon the heart,
and



and receive in their complaisant arms, lazy batchelors, weary husbands, and credulous strangers; when they are in conscience, obliged to ruin, to make themselves a name, and encourage their successors.

De Syrcè is a libertine, and that's all fair. Misfortune attend the ideots, who in love with the conjugal union, fall asleep amidst the vapours of the domestic dungeon, and become the tyrants of the unhappy charmers of whom they ought at most to be but the depositaries. However, de Syrcè has the good sense not to be faithful to his wife (an atrocious folly in this enlightened age); he has the merit of a conduct towards her, in every other respect the kindest in the world. He is neither jealous nor imperious; he lives with her as with a friend, whom he is studious to please; he has even some of those affections, which our manners rather tolerate than exact; and after his horses, his dogs, and his mistresses, Madame de Syrcè is certainly the thing in the world for which he

has the greatest affection. Add to this, that his military employments, which oblige him to frequent journies, render him one of the most adorable husbands that Heaven ever formed, for the conveniency of lovers. And on that account he carries with him, at every departure, not many regrets, (that would be too touching) but a thousand and a thousand benedictions.

It is upon this event that the pretensions of all those who dispute the heart of the Marchioness revive; every one has his hopes, every one his projects; and she is soon surrounded by a court, which displeases not a little the good old lady her mother; and a propos of her mother, she is, you must know, *one of the best sort of women in the world*; however, though her daughter has lived in her house ever since she was married, they have their separate apartments, and I rarely see that long edifying figure who gives the vapours for a fortnight, by a single rencounter when I have the honour to visit her.

But

But to come to the grand point. You may perceive by the description I have given you of her situation, that Madame de Syrcè is as independant as a pretty woman need wish to be, and I promise you, her liberty does not rust in her hands ; she runs from one public place to another ; from pleasure to pleasure ; you meet her at plays, at balls, in every circle ; at every supper, she seems to multiply herself, is every where at a time, and every where adored by the men, and envied by the women ; encouraging the one, laughing at the other ; but seeming more to enjoy the jealousy of her own sex, than the homage of ours.

These qualities premised, so sympathetic with my own, had I reason to expect that they would prove the rock to shipwreck the pride of my former successes ? I mounted all my guns made for the engagement, in the most masterly disposition ; but all went to the bottom. At first indeed she shewed me some little attention, and the means to do otherwise ; but I ne-

ver love to keep with women a distant fire, I am for grappling, and coming to warm work as soon as possible, that I may the sooner have done with them. Madame de Syrcè did not give me time to go so far. Subaltern coxcombs boast of conquests they never made; but men of true gallantry find a sort of recompence for their ill success in bravely avowing it; they hold up their ancient trophies, and I could even pardon my fair enemy but for the sake of example, and that it might be dangerous to accustom women to such hardy defences: there is still another reason.

Some persons pretend, that under a slight outside she covers solid principles, a fund of prudence, and a coat of mail of virtue, which wraps her on all sides when one least suspects it. It is essential for herself, that she should be no longer exposed to such suspicions; that she has been chaste through whim, I subscribe to it; but through virtue, oh for shame! it is from the excess of my esteem for her, that

I am

I am determined to endeavour to convict her of a weakness. I cannot engage her in my own favour, but I may seduce her by proxy; not being able to get her myself, it is but a part of decency to help her off to another.

To this end it is now about two months since I detached against her the Count de St. Albin: he is young, remarkably well made, and has one of those soft, sensible, romantic countenances, which catch the women, persuades them of every thing that is said to them, nay, of what is not said to them, fires their imagination, and in the upshot, disposes them to hear all, believe all, and grant all. To those advantages on the side of his person, let me add, that his birth is illustrious, we are even distant relations, and call cousins; but his family being for some years past out of favour at court, I have made use of my own gracious reception there, to present him, and introduce him among the women that give the ton. He succeeds extremely well; the ladies find his wit

sprightly, much expression in his eyes, and flatter themselves to make something of him. He has lately been engaged in an affair of honour, of which he has acquitted himself, with the highest distinction. To say all at once, St. Albin listens to me, believes me, is grateful for what I do for him, and in all probability will become one of our first figures.

You will agree with me, I believe, that I condemn the marchioness to a very slight punishment when I provide her with such an adorer. She has, I am well informed, notwithstanding what some part of the world think of her, brought two or three intrigues to a perfect *denouement*; but decently, and without noise. In the present affair, however, notoriety will be necessary; it is that in fact which I chiefly desire, for without an *eclat*, where would be my revenge?

I have introduced my champion into all the houses where our *dulcinea* sups. The old Presidente de Cornouille, who is as vicious now, as if she had the same right
to

to be so that she had forty years ago, brought him with her to Madame de Syrcè's, and what is better than all, the dame begins already to act upon the defensive. She affects to be out of humour, to have the air of not taking notice of him, is rude to him without any reason ; and when he is present, affects to laugh loud with the first fool that falls in her way, in order to hide her growing inclination. She does not perceive, that in this road she goes directly to the point where I want to decoy her ; nay, those airs of apparent indifference or dislike, are necessary in order to spur on St. Albin, who for eighteen months past has been sunk in the langour of another affair.

Well, through all these cords and wheels, do you begin to see the true principles of the machine ? The dear marchioness will fall foolishly in love with a man to whom she is almost indifferent, and be punished for ridiculously resisting me, in being forced to regret me ; but this is not all : by embarking St. Albin in an intrigue with a
woman

woman he does not care for, I facilitate to myself the means of getting from him a woman he loves; and I will leave you to judge, from the picture I am going to give you of her, whether she is worth the trouble of the enterprize.

She is in the first place an identified romance; young, blooming, delicate, and an Englishwoman. I have sometimes met her coming out of the comedy, where she always sits in a latticed box*; and at others I have rode before her house, which is situated about a league from Paris, where the inebriating pleasure of seeing her at her window, has almost made me fall from my horse. She resembles in size one of those young graces that now and then come from the pencil of Vien†; her countenance is serious, but noble; her look haughty, but it is easy to perceive that it can become tender; there reigns in all

* Some of the boxes in the theatre at Paris, are latticed, where ecclesiastics and other persons go who have no mind to be seen.

† A celebrated French painter.

her features a firmness that imposes respect, and a melancholy that invites to love. There are, however, some trifling faults in her person, but the whole together is luxurious, and it would be very possible to have a commerce with her, of the most enchanting kind.

To say the truth, I am not much surprised that poor St. Albin should have some repugnance to forsake her. I thought I should never have been able to bring him to it, and force him to take a certain flight. It was in vain to represent to him, that to be in love with an Englishwoman in the suburbs of Paris, was an insult to his country; he only answered me with a sigh; and though that answer was childish, it never failed to disconcert my eloquence. He pretends that he finds every thing in this mistress, figure, wit, character; that she abandons herself to him with a confidence that it would be horrible to deceive; that she has no consolation in the world but him, and what not. In a word, he would never finish, if one would let him alone,
when

when he is about to justify his attachment. Every circumstance of the intrigue tends to fix him, even to the mystery with which it is veil'd.

This Englishwoman living out of Paris, is not exposed to the observation of his family; then she leaves him perfectly at liberty, the consequence of the trust she places in his affection; he comes, he goes, without her ever complaining, and that, between ourselves, is one great motive that makes me wish to have her. I abhor your plaintive, unquiet females; those sort of turtles are murdering; and however amorous they may be, one does not like to be so narrowly questioned on the article of perfidies.

To conclude, my dear Viscount, you may perceive, from what I have told you, the nature of the intrigue which I have to conduct. Vengeance on one part, seduction on the other. Pardon the length of my letter, on account of its gravity. Why should not the detail of a love affair be as consequential as one of war or politics? I

know

know of no reason for it, but the error and folly of men, who are always attaching the most pompous ideas to the things of least consequence. I have told you what I am doing, return confidence for confidence, and let me know what employs you. Your adventures cannot have the same confidence with mine; they answer no doubt the unsettledness of your notions; but a true Frenchman makes conquests in running. I who am in a fixed port, proceed with mere method, and my memoirs ought necessarily to partake of the situation in which I write them.

I have been confined for three days to my hotel, so that I make no merit of sacrificing to you so much of my time as this epistle has taken up: I wanted employment; but answer me, and love me. I beg a description of your Roman beauties. It is said they are voluptuous: ours are hardly so; but they are false, coquettes, and will believe any thing: thus all is compensated.

L E T.

LETTER VII.

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Duc de CLERMONT.

YOU are greatly deceived, Monsieur le Duc, not only I am not on the point of settling preliminaries, as you seem to believe ; but I frankly own to you, I am discouraged by the difficulties I find with the Marchioness, as well as by the obstacles which my heart opposes to my prosecuting that affair. I am not yet proof against the disgusts attending an unsuccessful amour, and the repentance that never fails to follow an act of perfidy. I am but too sensible of the charms of Madame de Syrcè ; she is an enchantress ; she never says a word which ought not to be remembered ; all her motions are grace, and her every look a wound to the heart. The hours which appear tedious elsewhere, fly when we are near her ; we don't count but regret them ; but the more she interests

rests me, the less I find her an object to be sacrificed to the fancy of a moment.

In an effusion of heart, of which I acknowledge all the bounty you have confessed to me, that she is a conquest in which you have failed yourself; I leave you to determine whether I ought to attack a woman that was able to defeat you. If she disconcerted your experience, can I, who am yet a novice with the sex, hope a happier fortune? It is better to make an honourable retreat, than to risque a shameful repulse. Let me repeat it; the more the marchioness is dangerous, the more she warns me not to be rash.

She has not even with me that lightness and coquetry, which she indulges with many others; she often regards me with an air of disdain, sometimes quarrels with me, and contradicts me always: it looks as if she singled me out to make me the victim of her humours. I will not deny, that for some days my head has been ready to turn; and self-love, indignation, the shame of being ill-treated, might possibly have stood

stood in the place of passion, and exposed me to a good deal of uneasiness, if the voice of sentiment, honesty, and common justice had not called me back, and forced me to return to keep engagements which I approve, and an object that ought to be the more dear to me, for my being on the point to betray her.

Madame de Syrcè is, I repeat it, charming ; I shall never think of her without a secret delight ; nay, she will never be indifferent to my heart ; but in my poor Hamilton I already possess a woman no way inferior to her ; however, though this last has lost nothing of her attractions, I must confess, I no longer feel when I am near her, that tumult of the senses, that devouring fever, that inconceivable and almost painful ardour which accompanies the first transports of love. She inspires me with somewhat less lively, and more collected ; 'tis an inward tenderness, a soft emotion, a certain, I know not what, which occasions me the most sensible anguish whenever I find myself inclined to forsake her.

Love

Love may grow feeble in an honest heart ; but it is with difficulty it can be entirely extinguished ; it is too painful to break the idol one has formed ; to change into coldness and indifference, the adorations of a passion once really devout ; to strip off all the charms in which we dressed it, the being that we had made choice of to render us happy ; and in depriving it of part of the homage to which we had accustomed it, we in effect rob it of all.

I open my heart to you without the smallest remorse ; and I believe I cannot be sincere with any one that better deserves such a mark of my friendship. The services you have rendered my family, the particular marks of regard with which you have distinguished me, leaves me nothing to apprehend on the part of your discretion.

You know the world, and the human machine too well, not to discern immediately the inconvenience of my situation ; my youth, the facility of my nature, a warm head, a heart tolerably honest, the
illusions

illusions of self-love, and a wish founded on principles to act with honour; all this is at war within me, agitates me at once, and I fear will end by making me unhappy.

But why so? when I am resolved to follow the dictates of what is right. Yes, yes; there I fix. The idea is sweet, it leaves no sting. I would prefer even sensations the most painful, to those baneful pleasures which imprison the mind, and possess nothing durable but the remorse they draw after them.

But you have asked me what are the ties that so strongly unite me to this Englishwoman. Have you a mind to be let circumstantially into the secret? If you have, read the inclosed paper. I purposely send it detached from my letter, that you may look it over at any time, and that too great a length together, may not disgust you; but remember, notwithstanding your precaution against *tender weaknesses*, after having read my little history, (which by the way I hold most sacred, and never deposited in any heart but yours), I shall be

be disappointed if you do not relax a part of your prejudices in favour of sentiment and generosity.

I hear the king returns to-morrow to Choisy *. I will endeavour to see you there. Adieu, Monsieur le Duc.

A COPY of the Little MEMOIR inclosed in the preceding Letter.

MADEMOISELLE Hamilton is of a distinguished English family, though originally from Scotland. It had always been rigidly attached to the house of Stewart; and when in the year forty-five, the elder prince of that name made an attempt to recover the throne of his ancestors, from the branch that now sits on it, Mr. Hamilton, the father of my charmer, was one of the foremost to aid his struggle.

He quitted London, where he was happily settled, to join the Pretender at Edinburgh: you know the fate of that ill-ad-

* Another palace, or rather pleasure-house, belonging to the king of France, near Paris.

vifed expedition; after a few months deceitful fuccefs, Prince Charles was entirely defeated by the army commanded by the Duke of Cumberland, the younger fon of George II. and he and his adherents were obliged to efcape to the continent in the beft manner they were able.

Among thofe happy enough to do fo, was Mr. Hamilton; and foon after, his wife and daughter (then a child at the breaft) followed him to Poitiers in France, where on the little they could fave from the wreck of their fortune, affifted by a penfion allowed them from the Court of Verfaillies, they contrived to live with a degree of gentility not wholly unfuitable to their rank.

When his daughter was about feventeen, Mr. Hamilton died; by that event, the family were deprived of their penfion; but fuch was the prudence and economy of his widow, that the decrease in their income, had no apparent effect upon their manner of life. She ftill continued a handsome figure; and about a year after, my
regiment

regiment not being quartered far from the town, I, for the first time, became acquainted with Mademoiselle Hamilton.

We met at the old commander's de St. Brisson, where the best company of the place always assembled, and I never failed to go there as often as my military exercises would give me leave. 'Till then I was totally unacquainted with what it was to love; but the charms of the young Englishwoman soon taught my heart a lesson it was apt enough to learn: with what trucking characters Nature has taken care to make the first impressions of a susceptible mind! All the objects that surrounded me, began to assume a different appearance. The day seemed brighter, night more voluptuous, and sure never female was better formed to realize the chimeras of an ardent imagination, and justify the deliriums of the heart. Suppose every thing attractive in grace, and striking in beauty, a noble modesty, a natural decency, that interesting energy, of which few of the fair sex know the secret;

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a pene-

a penetrating wit, an exalted understanding, capable at once of the most delicate disquisitions in taste, and the profoundest reflection. There is Mademoiselle Hamilton. Such are the charms that robbed me of myself.

My looks frequently stole towards the object of my adoration ; and as often as they occasionally met hers, I felt my face covered with an involuntary blush. She soon perceived the empire she was gaining over me, and even began to be sensible of some sparks of the flame she had lighted ; she looked at me no more ; but her eyes, though cast down, let me still divine what they would express. There was expanded over all her features, a melancholy which heightened their beauty ; not that austere seriousness, that frightens the chastest familiarity, and betrays a barrenness of soul ; but that soft sadness, which is never without some disposition to love, and nourishes, after having produced it.

At the end of six months of languor and
constraint,

constraint, of torments, and combats with myself, in which I never failed to prove my own weakness ; I was one day sitting in her dressing-room, with Madame Hamilton, (for I was now almost continually at her house) when after a short silence, during which I observed she suffered some inward conflict, the good old lady spoke to me as follows : “ I have for some time had something to say to you, Monsieur le Comte, which I must own has given me a great deal of uneasiness ; but as it must be said one time or another, it is as well now.” Here she stopt, and I was going to reply from a *presentiment* of her subject, but she prevented me, by continuing immediately, “ Your visits to me and my daughter, are certainly the most agreeable to us in the world, and in one sense, do us the highest honour ; but give me leave to tell you, that in another, I am afraid they may afford malicious people room to make us the object of unjust observation. You are young, Monsieur le Comte, you are a man of

D 2

“ quality

“ quality and fortune. My daughter is
“ young, in some sort a stranger in this
“ country, and has her fortune to make.
“ I shall add nothing further, but leave
“ your own honour and good sense to
“ imagine what I would say ; only let me
“ premise, that Mademoiselle Hamilton
“ knows nothing of this conversation, nor
“ should I speak to you in such a manner,
“ did not my regard for your character,
“ as well as my own reputation, engage
“ me to it.”

At this moment Mademoiselle Hamilton entered the room ; and ere she had time to sit down, I threw myself before her, at her mother’s feet, and catching one of her hands, “ Ah Madam ! ” cried I, “ what have you said to me ? do you mean
“ to insinuate that I should come no more
“ here ? I beseech you, I implore you,
“ condemn me not to so cruel a banishment. What I have never yet dared
“ to avow to your daughter herself, I now
“ freely confess to you both. I love her,
“ I adore her, I cannot live happy with-
“ out

“ out her ; and if I am deprived of the
“ pleasure of her society, expect some-
“ thing fatal to be the consequence. It
“ is true I am young ; I am yet answer-
“ able for my conduct to my family, but
“ my heart and honour are at my own
“ disposal, and I never will violate the
“ one, where I have given the other ;
“ and by that honour I swear, I have no
“ designs in coming hither that can afflict
“ you or injure your daughter, whom I
“ would die to protect. Do not then on
“ account of vain fears, or vainer puncti-
“ lios, deprive me of a blessing that is ne-
“ cessary to my existence ; but permit me
“ to continue my visits, till something in
“ my behaviour makes me really unwor-
“ thy of your confidence.”

I uttered all this with a vehemence,
that persuades more than the most studied
discourse. I looked at the mother and
daughter, and saw their eyes fixed on each
other, but Mademoiselle Hamilton's were
swimming in tears, and those of the old
lady soon burst out ; when gently raising

me, she said, "Monsieur le Comte, we
" will talk no farther of this matter ; by
" the distress visible in my daughter's
" countenance, I perceive by pursuing
" it, I should afflict her as well as you. I
" confide then in your mutual discretion.
" My daughter's natural good sense gives
" her a right to be mistress of her own
" actions ; which though I may advise, I
" never shall pretend to controul. She
" is sufficiently apprised of my sentiments ;
" in the mean time remember what you
" owe to God, the world, and your-
" selves."

In a short time after this, Mademoiselle
Hamilton and I ceased to have any secrets
for one another. I entertained her con-
tinually with my passion ; and she, with a
noble frankness, owned her's for me. She
told me she had confessed it to her mother
long before ; and that excellent woman
had represented to her in the strongest
terms, the danger of giving way to such
a sentiment ; but she said she did not know
her

her mother designed to forbid me the house.

And now, Monsieur le Duc, you will, no doubt, think I made use of so favourable an opportunity, to seize a happiness for which I languished ; but you are mistaken ; every freedom that innocence could allow pass'd between us, and no other. Good God ! how could I think of staining a purity which appeared to me the more sacred, for the candour and *naïveté* to which it was joined ; but had I been so vilely inclined, Mademoiselle Hamilton's tenderness and respect for her mother was such, that I am convinced (all other considerations out of the case) no earthly power could have prevailed on her to deceive, or give her pain but for a moment. She had confided in her, and that was a security beyond all bonds. It was above a twelvemonth after this, that our connection began, upon the footing it has ever since continued.

Madame Hamilton, who had been in a declining state of health from the time of

her husband's death, was seized with a violent disorder in her stomach; the physicians soon declared they had no hopes. I happened to be then at quarters. The day she died, she desired to see me. I entered her chamber, where I found her raised in her arm-chair; I could not help putting one knee to the ground, taking her hand, and pressing it to my lips. She turned her dying eyes upon me, with a look of tenderness mixed with concern, and then lifting them to her daughter, who stood on the other side, her face bathed in tears; "My child," said she, "we are going to part; I am forced to leave you in the midst of a dangerous world, with nothing but your virtue and good sense to support you. I would wish to say a great deal to you now, because my advice can be no longer useful to you; but the count is a man of honour." Here her weakness forced her to fetch her breath, and her daughter falling on her knees, she bent a little forward, and putting her arms round
both

both our necks, "I can do no more," said she in a faint tone of voice, "than give you my blessing. God——" At that word, she bowed her head, and expired without a groan, in the posture of embracing us.

We soon perceived the state she was in; the grief of the daughter was calm and composed; no cries escaped her; she rose from her knees, and then turning to me with a profound sigh, "Count," said she, "I have now no friend but you." These words, and those pronounced by her mother with her last breath, are engraved on my heart, where they will never be defaced; and I am convinced there is no sacrifice Mademoiselle Hamilton could at that moment have required of me, which I would have scrupled to make her. I even offered to marry her; but she considered my situation, she knew such a step would never be forgiven me by my family, and that it might occasion my ruin. Her mother was now dead; she had no body to answer to but to herself, was above

vulgar prejudices, and acted with generosity by the man she loved. I, in my turn, promised never to forsake her; and no doubt she looks upon herself as much my wife as if our hands had been joined by the priest.

It was no longer agreeable nor advisable for her to remain at Poitiers; and my father soon after calling me to *Paris*, I obtained her promise that she would follow me, and settle there. My first care on my arrival, was to seek for her a house, which by her own desire, was at some little distance from town. That at *Antueil* fell in my way, but through a singular nicety, though I pressed her to let me furnish it, which I would have done with the greatest elegance, she absolutely refused; neat and simple was all she required, and she would pay for every thing herself: and notwithstanding you may imagine to the contrary, I can assure you, since we have been together, she never has, nor could I prevail with her to put me to the smallest expence. She enjoys an income of about four thousand

land livres a year (her mother's jointure,) which is regularly paid to her order, on the Exchange of London, and she says it is more than sufficient.

This, Monsieur le Duc, is the nature of the connection between Mademoiselle Hamilton and me; and what honest man, what man not lost to all honour and humanity, would think of breaking with such a woman, after such incontestible proofs of her confidence and esteem? he must be a monster: no doubt the force of an attachment depends upon the circumstances that attend it, and every circumstance capable of strongly cementing, meet in this. She is a woman of a family totally disinterested, and even of a noble spirit; handsome in her person, well educated, and of a superior understanding. I shall not mention her virtue, because the unjust prejudices of the world, would make you laugh at me. But I can say, what in my esteem, ought to be more; she has sacrificed to me the virtue she reveres. The innocence of her life, which she passes in the most

domestic manner, the sweetness of her disposition, her fidelity and tenderness, all rise up in my mind, and oppose my rash desires, when they would carry me away I know not whither.

LETTER VIII.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE, to
her Friend Madame BREVAL.

HOW cruel is your husband with his odious jealousy! Can it be, that he will not suffer you even to converse with women? You must have found my name often at your door. My dear friend, I wanted a little chat. Alas! that weakness, with which the men reproach us, has its source in our souls; how is mine fatigued with a thousand nothings it wants to say! It is impossible to satisfy that longing with any one but you, and yet one can never find you at home: however, I have the comfort, to be sure, that you participate in my disappointments.

Educated

Educated in one convent, born with tastes nearly the same, linked to each other by all the circumstances that invite ingenuous natures to reciprocal attachment, it is long since we promised never to keep any thing hidden between us, by that means to soften our mutual sufferings. The vows made in early youth, are generally vague; ours have not been so. The causes that operate disunion among most women, have had no effect upon you and me; reason has fortified the instincts of childhood. I pardon your being handsome; you do not wish me uglier; in fine, each has given the other marks of a generosity, proof against the general failings of her sex.

Believe me, my friend, with all our appearance of levity, we are worth a thousand of those prudish creatures who pretend to find fault with us; an evaporation of the spirits is often the safeguard of the heart, and the terror which we are now and then thrown into by an indiscreet thought, causes no more than a flight of
simple

simple giddiness, which is better than a serious weakness. At such times, we resemble those timid birds, who go twenty times further than they need, to put themselves out of the reach of the fowler; however one is not less honest for being frightened; and such is the true history of half the poor souls the world calumniate. But, God bless me! I laugh, while what I have to communicate to you, concerns the fate of my life. In spite of myself I elude the business of my letter, and I keep off, what I sat down to say to you.

When I married Monsieur Syrcè, I was yet scarcely more than an infant; you can bear testimony, that during the first year of our union, in spite of the licentiousness of French manners, in spite of the folly natural to my age, and the vanity of conquests, I loved him to distraction. All my sensibility was then collected on one object. In the space of three years I was twice a mother; those new ties strengthened the former, and my passion would have still endured, had not my husband

band himself been industrious to destroy it. He would have given me less pain, had he taken away my life. As long as I could, I endeavoured to deceive myself, and attributed his change to some faults in me. The scandal and tumult attending his debaucheries, however, at length obliged me to open my eyes, and dissipated my errors. I was well assured he sacrificed me to those horrid wretches who sport with the health, the honour, and the fortune of their lovers. Then succeeded timorous reproaches, secret tears, and all the torments which marriage prepares for slighted, fond wives.

Under the eyes of a reputable parent, who joins to the most severe principles the most tender heart, I cultivated the fruits of my ill-requited love. I watched the education of my children myself, and I hoped by that means, to bring back their father. Vain hope! the more he was deceived and injured abroad, the more he scorned to be happy at home. The tranquillity of domestic enjoyments would have rendered

rendered him too foreign to the manners of his age.

Otherwise, I had no reason to complain of his behaviour; a cloud was never seen upon his brow, never the slightest disapprobation of my conduct escaped from him; always chearful, always content: on condition that I did not attempt to disturb him in his pleasures, he left me absolute mistress of mine. I never abused that liberty; but I found weariness gain upon me. I grew ill-humoured; my temper, naturally warm and lively, became at length unable to support continual insult, and I scorned any longer to love without return.

Fatigued with suffering, terrified at the thought of being abandoned, and finding nothing round me but a frightful void, I next sought in the world all those illusions which are incapable of recompensing the loss of true pleasure. I returned to the noisy society I had fled; having no longer hopes of happiness, I had need of intoxication. I had need (for one must be attached to something) of the homage of those

those very men, for whom I never permitted myself to entertain the smallest regard. I read romances to amuse my mind; I listened to compliments and vows of adoration, to try if vanity could lay anguish asleep; and I had recourse to coquetry, to help me to get the better of sensibility. I wished to be steady to my duty; but I had a mind at the same time to enjoy all the privileges annexed to my age, my figure, and my rank.

I was not long without a splendid train of admirers. When one does not scare them away, the men come about one in flocks, and one keeps them as long as one grants them nothing. In that consisted all my skill. The women, however, who are always charitable, did not fail to suspect me of having recourse to other means; and it is not less true, that I had some appearances against me; for the more I depended on my virtue, the less studious I was to avoid indecorums; and it is indecorums, my dear, to which half the *talked-of* part of our sex owe their loss of repu-

reputation. Guilty decency attracts respect; while the world thinks every accusation permitted against a woman who relies more on real innocence, than the appearance of it.

I had twenty followers, they gave me twenty gallants. Nobody excited more than I, that sort of scandal which flatters some, afflicts others, vexes often even the culpable, and which every body ought to avoid as much as possible. I breathed nothing but incense; I walked upon nothing but flowers; every thing, to my eyes, had the air of a feast; and all this enchantment arose from my independency. Why have I not preserved it? Why can I not resume it again? Alas! it is gone beyond my reach, gone for ever. This is what oppresses me, what I fain would let you know, and what I fear to tell you; and yet it is what perhaps, you are acquainted with already.

Oh! my friend, I weep in your arms, and my tears are an avowal of my misfortune. I love! yes; I love, but I
will

will have the force, the prudence to conceal it: but why can I not think of it without horror? I know not why, but that my heart presages the consequences of it will be fatal to me; it will imbitter my days; it will abridge them; but no matter, the more it alarms me, the more I abandon myself to it.

I have no occasion to name to you the object of my idolatry. I imagine all the world must divine it; for he alone, among the crowd of our young men, seems worthy of notice, and is capable of justifying a foible, if that be possible. A foible! Oh my God! what a name do I give it; but fear nothing, rather felicitate me on the strength of my courage, which is equal to my love.

From the moment I first saw the Count de St. Albin (his name has escaped me, it is always on my lips) from that moment I felt those involuntary disorders, the forerunners of violent passions; they encreased from day to day, till at length they are at their height. However, I am still able to contain

contain them within bounds. The more I am inwardly agitated, the more cold and indifferent I appear to him. I go abroad oftener than ever, and bear about with pain, in the hurry of a world indifferent to me, the wounds of a heart, that I fear never can be cured.

I seek for nothing but the Count de St. Albin; and yet when I find him, I have the air of not seeing him. I hardly recover his visits; I like rather to meet him elsewhere than at home; and even to fly from him, than invite him. In a word, he thinks me, with regard to him, the most unjust and unreasonable of women, while in reality, he alone employs my thoughts. If he knew the truth of my situation, what would become of me? But he never shall; no, my friend, be persuaded I will bound my folly to my own breast, and yours, in whose, I can, without danger, confide; but judge from hence of what I suffer, and what I must suffer.

To love, and conceal it; to love, and not know whether my passion is returned;

to fear a hundred rivals, without the right of complaining of one; to love for my torment, and yet comply with it; to devour my tears, my inquietudes, my jealousies, and die by a slow fire, that no art can extinguish, you will surely say this is a martyrdom! but your friend is resolved to devote herself to it; yes, that woman, so giddy, so frivolous, so indiscreet, who has been so truly judged by the world, is resolved to suffer, to languish, to die: she may be pitied, but she shall not be reproached.

Under the continual restraint in which I live, I see but one ray of comfort. The Count has not hitherto, apparently, attached himself to any particular woman he converses with, and is carested by them all, without giving a decided preference. I cannot express to you, how much this idea softens my pains; but momentary consolation! he certainly loves some one—and it is not me: Another enjoys the happiness of which I deprive myself; another receives in her arms, that adored being,

being, which all the duties of social life for ever banish from mine. My dear friend, sole confident of my soul, I will sacrifice all to continue innocent in my own eyes, that my honour may be without stain, and the only weakness which ever surprised me, may, by an heroic self-denial, be erected into virtue.

But here let me stop to read over what I have written; mad-woman! mad-woman!—yet I repent of nothing. I am sure I shall augment your esteem for me, by exposing my thoughts, my conduct, without disguise. Love, to the degree I feel it, and in the manner I feel it, degrades not, but raises the character; and it should seem as if women had no other way to arrive at superiority. Give me no advice; once more, I will inform you of every thing just as it passes. You shall read my very soul. I have but you to whom I dare lay it open. My present infatuation, violent as it is, will never lessen the ardor of my friendship; and if my presages are realized,

realized, I shall part my last sigh between you and the man I love.

LETTER IX.

From the Duc de CLERMONT to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

INDEED, my poor Count, you are pathetic to a degree beyond what I expected. Your letter and your memoir together are a complete tragedy; and though I am not over-fond of melancholy romances, have touched me profoundly; however, if you should chance to have by you any pure histories in the same dramatic stile, I must intreat you to spare me the reading of them, in compassion to my extreme sensibility.

You are in the right of it; my exterior is deceitful; though I turn almost every thing to jest, I have found nothing to laugh at, in your description of your intrigue with the Englishwoman; my soul
is

is still in *fussion* from it. I did not know before, that the good old lady had given you on her death-bed the nuptial blessing. Certainly the circumstance is nothing less than jocular; but it is edifying, and that's better.

There's an end of the matter, all's over, and you are bound to your island princess for life: no doubt, with such an assistant you will be able to push your way with infinite alacrity. I am willing to believe, that the mother and daughter did not combine to practise upon your youth and inexperience; I am willing to believe, (for I am naturally a good soul, with the credulity of an infant) that they did not play the farce of virtue in distress, and make that shew of honour, and heroism, which you so foolishly describe to fascinate you with the greater security; neither will I examine how far such an extraordinary connection may injure your advancement, and cover you with indelible ridicule. What is ridicule, when it is recompensed by the pleasures of the heart?

What

What signifies distinctions or fortune to a man who possesses, about a league from Paris, a foreign beauty, who has neither relations nor friends, and forgets herself with him in a new Eden which their own hands have planted?

It is really a delightful manner of life, an absolute resurrection of the golden age; and was I fool enough to endeavour to turn your attention upon a little insignificant marchioness? What, in consequence, could she have to oppose to the charms of a Mademoiselle Hamilton? A mere gad-about, of whom all the world talks, who is well received at court, adored in Paris, run after by our most fashionable young men, and is, in short, in the bloom of youth and beauty, and the height of reputation, or more properly idolization.

What horror! who could take up with such a mistress? Nobody in your happy circumstances most certainly; and far be it from me any more to propose her to you; bury yourself alive with your *new Eloisa*; see no one but her; value no one but her;

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spin pastorals, and despise all the world can say. Your family may exclaim a little, but no matter ; you can take refuge in your garden, barricade yourself there with your angel, and defy the universe.

A pretty thing indeed, if relations shall pretend to contradict our inclinations, and force from the innocence of rural life two young hearts that seem to have been born for it ! I lay a wager the Chevalier de Gerac encourages you, with all his might, in your laudable dispositions. And now I talk of him, let me tell you that same Chevalier appears to be one or other of the most impertinent little pedants that I have any where met with. I know not what perverse wind blows amongst those slender gentry, who from the bottom of their Gothic castles come to plague us with qualities yet more Gothic. The cloud of those sort of people that has lately appeared is really an eruption, and I can compare it to nothing but those blasts that now and then arrive from the north to darken our horizon. You will, no doubt, think me
very

very bold for telling you so plainly my sentiments of a person you have taken by the hand ; but not presuming to contest the propriety of your love, I fancy I have the right to criticise your friendship.

But you will tell me this friend of yours has virtues ! say rather vulgar prejudices ; which we always find sticking to the rest of the provinces, and a low education. His virtues arise from nothing, prove nothing, lead to nothing ; with such virtues, we go back instead of forward. They serve only to make garrison pedagogues, and at length old mutilated captains, who after having lost legs and arms, without the court knowing any thing of the matter, retire to their native cottages, to play the old soldier against some poor devil of a curate, who curses them living, and interests them with pleasure ; but of this too much. Certainly, my dear count, you are perfectly the master of your own conduct ; and zeal ought not to degenerate into tyranny ; mine, therefore, submits to circumstances.

I own I imagined I saw in you the most happy disposition to make a figure ; to become a point of view in the great world, and turn the frivolity of a fashionable character to account, in advancing the success of the highest pretensions. I fancy'd above all, that you were master of that sort of wit which achieves conquests among the women ; frets them, grieves them, makes them wild and tame by turns ; and that, subjecting them all to one general plan, you would turn your intrigues to the profit of your ambition, and free your fortune by the variety of your pleasures ; but I see the old *commander* judged truer of you than I. The other day, in the *Tuilleries*, he asserted, that you were unequal to a certain flight ; I told him that I had almost brought you to a footing with Madame de Syrcé ; he offered to lay me a wager against your success ; I took him at his word ; I have lost a hundred louis ; however I only regret my opinion.

But

But you cry, Madame de Syrcè escaped me, and for that reason you ought not to undertake her. Excellent logic ! if you were in a humour to hear reason, I would answer you, that the thing is by so much the more feasible for you, as it was difficult for me.

Women, my good friend, have no supernumerary strength ; and when they have been fatigued by a long and painful resistance, there is just reason to believe they would not be proof against a second attack ; besides, what consequence is to be drawn from a caprice ? Would not one suppose, that with Madame de Syrcè the rigors of the evening were to decide her behaviour next morning ? And why with her, more than the rest of the sex ? If I had had two days more to throw away, you would not have had such an objection to make me. Have you really then faith in the virtue of the marchioness ? I committed a fault, I confess it ; I laid my plan too openly ; my celebrity put her on her guard, and it was the public she was afraid

of. Take away the scandal of the thing, and you will find no more cruel fair ones; every woman will be as complaisant as you would have her; they are never what you call honest by inclination.

In one word, I repeat it to you, the obstacles that existed to prevent my making a progress, were none of them against you. She might a long time have entertained a commerce with the Count de St. Albin, before the whisperers of amorous history would have taken hold of it. You were no notorious libertine, no figure pointed at as a seducer of women; but the time is past for thinking of those things. The mother of Mademoiselle Hamilton, from the center of her tomb would call to you to be faithful to her daughter, and the ghost of the old Briton, her spouse, would come and shake the curtains at night, if you ceased a moment to be so.

Adieu, my dear Count, I shall be always charmed to see you, notwithstanding your lamentable amours, and the veneration you are resolved to force me to have for you.

L E T.

LETTER X.

From the Count de St. ALBIN, to the
Duc de CLERMONT.

YOU are cruel, or you do not sufficiently enter into all the embarrassments of my situation. Irony is only proper with those who are in a state of mind sufficiently tranquil to answer it. Permit me to tell you, the tone you assume is neither that of superiority nor reason. The one seeks means to relieve us, the other furnishes them. You do neither; and yet I had never more need of assistance and consolation.

I am angry with you, I cannot help saying so. You have led me into a snare, and there you leave me; nay, 'tis from the edge of the pit that you rally the man you have decoy'd into it; but for you I never should have known Madame de Syrcè. I was happy in the woman I possess'd, and desired no other. It was you that took

the pains to paint that conquest to me, in colours, the greater part of which seduced my vanity, and of which some portion perhaps went to my heart.

Is it possible that you could not perceive it? all my letter speaks the combat of a man of probity, who wrestles against himself, takes his penitence for resolutions, endeavours to hide his weakness from his own observation, dwells on purpose upon the circumstances that would render such a weakness culpable, and applauds himself at least, for meditating the sacrifice of it. If I expatiated on such particulars as might serve to render Hamilton most interesting, it was to engage you on her side, open your heart to her misfortunes, and find her a protector; but you, instead of interpreting me as I expected, endeavour to fill me with injurious suspicions against her, which is an insult to candor itself.

Oh inexcuseable caprice of men! we do justice to the object we ought to regard, we feel the force of our obligations, and yet we have the barbarous courage to
break

break through them. From whence can proceed this eternal void of the heart? What is this everlasting inquietude that nothing can fix? Attractive charms of change! You promise happiness, and are followed only by affliction. What torments poison your pleasures! but I will prevent them; I will accustom myself to see the marchioness with the eyes of indifference, no longer to feel her disdain, to laugh at her affected distractions; in a word, to stifle a fancy in its birth, which may be changed into a passion by the force of obstacles, the play of caprice, and the artful management of coquetry.

With the sagacity which I know you profess, I cannot imagine how you fail to take notice, that the marchioness has not the least idea of me; and that if I was fool enough to fall in love with her, she would certainly make a joke of it; in four visits at her house, perhaps I am admitted once; and during a cold conversation, which is at a stand every instant, her whole person has an air of constraint, and she seems un-

willing even to look at me. If another man enters while I am there, immediately her gaiety revives; her eyes grow animated; she appears to have got rid of a burthen, and I give her so much pain, that all who come unlooked for, seem so many comforters.

I am not, however, sorry for this; it teaches me the better how to value the charms of one who ought to be dearer to me; a heart frank and open, which was never dishonoured by artifice. And yet perhaps I may be unjust too; perhaps no art enters into the conduct of Madame de Syrcè. I cause her no sensations at all; she feigns nothing; I think her studied, and she is natural. Here is the whole secret of her constrained behaviour, her reserved discourse, the rudeness she sometimes treats me with; when I have not given her the least offence. Happily the *panchant* she has inspired me with is yet but equivocal, and may be easily extinguished. My case would be bad indeed, was I in love with her in earnest.

But

But that is an idea I cannot endure. My poor tender Hamilton! what then would become of you? of you that I forced from your quiet asylum! of you that knows, that desires to know, nobody but me! and who would accuse yourself of a crime in daring to doubt my honour or my love; what must your situation be? and what, in a little time, would be mine? Yes, be persuaded, Monsieur le Duc, in spite of the bitterness of your sarcasms, the malignity of your inuendoes, and all the force of your rhetoric, I rejoice in my perfect return to the woman whom I cannot forsake without the blackest ingratitude.

After this protestation, let me add, that you are not deceived, when you suppose the Chevalier de Gerac does his utmost to strengthen me in such sentiments. An inflexible censor of every thing that is not just, he is an ardent admirer of all that is so; and I should think the sole title of my friend, ought to have been his shelter from the inhuman abuse you have indulg'd your-

self in, against him. I shall not take the trouble to defend his birth : his family, without being illustrious, is ancient ; it has furnished the State at all times with many brave gentlemen, who have shed their blood for their country ; and so much the worse for the Court, if such services remain unrecompensed. But that which it becomes me to defend, is his heart, his character, and my own choice.

If Gerac has been negligent of distinctions, it has been through his love of glory. He was not born for a courtier, but he certainly possesses all the qualities necessary to form a citizen ; and if ever you become a little better acquainted with him, you will blush for having so ill judged, and employed such contemptuous terms in speaking of a man who is worthy of your regard as well as mine ; and who, by a noble disinterestedness, has placed himself above protectors.

Forgive the warmth of these expressions in favour of one you have afflicted, by attempting to degrade a person he loves :
detested

detested be the wretch who feels not the outrage offered to his friend !

LETTER XI.

From the Chevalier de GERAC to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

I AM extremely sorry, my dear Count, that I was not at home, when you did me the honour to call on me : I was getting rid of some tiresome, but importunate visits. At my return, they gave me your letter ; I read it with infinite satisfaction. At length, then, you are what you ought to be : you have adopted the principles congenial to your nature, and from whence nothing can turn you, but a movement foreign to your heart.

I am not at all acquainted with Madame de Syrcè, and but very little with your charming Englishwoman ; but I know enough of the latter, to be convinced of her extraordinary merit ; and in your eyes she should have infinite.

I can-

I cannot think her a common mistress, to be left at pleasure; and I foresee the consequence of this new amour; it will soon render you indifferent to her; her uneasiness at seeing herself slighted, will make her become irksome to you; and the next step will be, to abandon her intirely: her birth, her character, her conduct, the particularity of her situation with you, which precludes her from all rights, should be her security against so hard a measure. Where a man of honour is bound to nothing, when justice is in the case, he thinks himself doubly obliged to pay all. Was Mademoiselle Hamilton actually married to you, I don't know whether I should say so much upon this occasion. A man often returns to a wife, after a range of debauchery; but seldom to a mistress, when he has once left her. To the first there are many things to induce him, even putting conscience and inclination out of the case; to the last, nothing but on those two principles.

But you might tell me perhaps, that
your

your affair with the Marchioness was only designed for a *gallantry*; a word to signify, the seduction of a woman without caring for her. In France, 'tis true, our sex make little or no scruple of that cruelty: they approach the other with respect, while they resist, ill treat them when they yield, and intoxicate only to disgrace them. Oh shame! and could my Count de St. Albin make use of such a term to imply such an action? Far be from him that fatal power of contagion!

For my own part, I know not how to reconcile it. Men would be happy, yet they begin by poisoning the source of their felicity. Let us endeavour to esteem women, and we shall see whether they will become estimable; at least we have no right to condemn manners we encourage, and punish what we occasion. When women deceive us, and degrade themselves, the fault is generally ours, and in justice so should be the infamy.

I always detested your self-entitled *men of gallantry*; under the amenity of an agreeable

greeable outside, they hide a savage nature. Their souls are frozen, their understandings low; and without the consequence they derive from their intrigues, they would be mere automata, covered with contempt and ridicule, and a weariness of their being. Perhaps this picture may be a little too strongly coloured; but it is not amiss sometimes to exaggerate, in order to make them plain; when the rock is sufficiently marked, it is our own fault if we do not avoid it.

You will probably think me strangely moralizing for my age; and indeed that circumstance considered, might, with any one else, rob my counsels of a little of their weight; but you have too much sense for me to fear such an inconveniency with you. A Mentor of five-and-twenty may, for ought I see, be as useful as a pedagogue of sixty; nay, methinks the natural and early sentiment of what is right, should have more effect than the slow acquisitions of experience. When old age instructs, we are at liberty to suppose that
half

half its documents are dictated by the chagrine of privation; it interdicts what it can no longer enjoy, and in that case its rigor is but envy.

Let young men then give advice, and even lessons, if needful. In the effervescence of youth, if we are not honest through reason, we are generally so by instinct. The traces of innocence are undefaced. We have not yet advanced far enough in life, to be hardened and corrupted by misfortune. The heart, still a novice in those calculations which wither and dry it up, being less limited to its own concerns, is more ready to expand itself. It loves, because it hopes a return; and the poisoned fruits which years bring along with them, have not yet adulterated the purity of its impressions.—Age is the season of wisdom, youth that of virtue.

Pardon this digression; it came under my pen, and I never regret what sentiment inspires, though it may sometimes have the air of pedantry. And now to return

return to the more immediate subject of my letter, your two ladies.

Of Mademoiselle Hamilton I have already said sufficient. She must not be unkindly treated. She has given you her heart ; she has a right to yours. She has trusted your honour, to which she has sacrificed the opinion of the world ; and to that world you must not abandon her. You have had time to prove the excellence of her disposition : you are a man of a penetration not to be imposed upon : you have often talked to me in raptures of it ; and since she has lost no part of her charms, she should loose no part of her happiness : for be assured, the state of apathy in which she has for some time left you, is more to be attributed to your fault than to hers.

As to Madame de Syrcè, she has no claims upon you of any kind, and you ought not to find in her any attractions. You have met her by accident at different places ; you have even been sometimes at her house ; she appeared agreeable to
you ;

you; your fancy took fire: her self-love was flattered, and her heart set you at defiance. This was all she wanted; she has no more to demand; and ought to be perfectly well content with the lengths you have gone. But I must tell you, the parts of your letter which I least like, are those where you talk to me of this lady. You are never tired of her panegyric. Uneasily least I should not see her with the same eyes you do, you have given me her picture above twenty times.

I seldom follow public opinion; but you cannot be ignorant that it is by no means favourable to the marchioness. She is generally thought giddy, dissipated; shewing herself every where; intoxicated with her fine guests; and, in a word, given up to imprudence. For myself I know nothing. It is possible what I here repeat may be mere scandal; neither are all these faults, however real, what I would oppose to the gratification of your desires, were you at liberty, and resolved to try your success with her.

But,

But, my dear Count, if the marchioness does not take care, her reign will be but of short duration ; her bloom will wear off, her figure may lose its delicacy, her faults (if she has them) will then no longer be seen through a veil, and her understanding will remain to punish them. These sorts of women, like flashes of lightning, have an *eclat* too brilliant to be lasting ; and when once past, not a trace of it appears. But I think I imitate you, and shall never have done. Surely Madame de Syrcè uses some witchcraft to make people love to talk of her.

I thank you a thousand times for your obliging offers. But you know me. It is now four years since I have served under your orders ; and, I believe, during that time you have not observed in me the smallest avidity after rewards. I divide myself between the duties of my profession, and those I owe my father, a respectable old man, who lives upon his estate, full of scars, above honours, unknown by the Court, and adored by his vassals. I have endeavoured to

possess

possess myself of his principles. 'Till my actions speak for me, I will not have distinctions to depose against me. I prefer the laborious patience of a man of courage, to the busy laziness of the courtier. One has shame to cover, and stands in need of titles; the other wishes but for glory, and waits the opportunity to acquire it.

Adieu, my dear Count. Once more, take care of yourself; speak a little less of Madame de Syrcè, be faithful to your *Belle Angloise*, and act in such a manner, as that I shall have no occasion to defend her.

LETTER XI.

From the Viscount de *** to the Duc de CLERMONT.

YOU are pleased to say so, my dear Duke; but take it from me, when a man is tired, he is good for nothing. Rome, with its indulgences and ceremonies, is one of the most disagreeable place

ces to live in that I know. My uncle, who is a warm politician, is a still more zealous partisan of religious rites ; so that I am forced to be devout two or three times a week, in my own defence. I am a philosopher ; I generalize my ideas, and see things in a certain light that my uncle has no notion of.

With regard to antique monuments, and curiosities of art, you will allow they are a cold spectacle for a man of my age, who is not mad after painted canvas, and no fonder of a marble woman, than a cardinal would be of a page Ju Bronze. What are to me the allegories of Paul Veronese ; the transfiguration of Luke, the fall of the angels by Raphael ? I believe I confound—but no matter, one must always quote. I should be glad to see you, who talk, reduced to admire the *Aldobrandine marriage*, or the statues of Bernini or Bandinelli.

On the subject of ruins and tombs, I beg you will permit me to be silent ; and still less shall I attempt to entertain you with

with a description of the theatres of this august city. I prefer our little interludes, our elegant *ballets*, and our opera, such as it is, a thousand times beyond the tedious representations they kill one with here. I am going to surprise you, perhaps, but I tell you seriously, what I like best in Rome are the whores and the Harlequins: these, my dear Duke, are the fruits of my observations.

Do not imagine, however, that I have wanted adventures, and those even among the good company. The Italian ladies are courteous; they task me infinitely, and find me, above all things, very sensible. Their husbands have the name of being dangerous, particularly for the indiscreet. I have hitherto, notwithstanding, escaped their vigilance; have had nothing to settle with them; that is to say, all my business has been with their wives. These last are false as water; but they have soft skins, amorous dispositions; and I have found them to possess much candour *dans la physique*.

But

But a propos. I must tell you what has happened to me with the mistress of the house where we lodge; who (as I fancy you will allow) has an admirable manner of exercising hospitality.

This lady, whose husband is my uncle's particular friend, is of a distinguished family in Naples; and, true to her birth, she also conducts herself with all the distinction imaginable. She has an outward *non chalance* about her, which seems to be entirely her own. She lets all her words fall half pronounced. Her breasts, which are ravishing, are never restrained, but by a ribbon or two negligently tied, which are always ready to slip their knots upon occasion. Her eyes swim in a shining fluid, and bear a languishing expression that invites to every thing, without absolutely promising it. Her slightest covering seems to be a weight for her; and all day, half entranced upon the cushion of a sofa, she throws her figure, by every little motion, into the most seducing attitudes.

Her

Her person, and yet more her behaviour, soon lighted in me the most violent desires; but it appeared as if she had not perception enough to discover it, or the inclination to gratify them. I despaired of a favourable conclusion; and saw not in the looks of my idol any gleams of success. Her husband, jealous as his countrymen were a century or two ago, loves his wife to madness; but he loves pictures still better. They were selling in his neighbourhood the cabinet of a virtuoso. He had purchased many pieces of the highest price. He would transport them himself from the place of sale.

Scarce was he gone out (which he very seldom chuses to do) when I heard the slippers of a woman upon the stairs that lead to my chamber. She ran up with incredible haste. You may imagine I thought of nothing less than my fair indolent; but what was my surprise, when I saw her open my door, in her most luxurious dishabille! Her neck was uncovered, her hair negligently hanging over one shoulder; in

fine, she entered the room ; and throwing herself upon a sort of settee, she cried, with an air of ingenuity, altogether charming, *Eccomi ; il mio marito è fuori di casa !*

You will easily suppose, that I put as much celerity in the fact, as she had done *naiveté* in the proposal. Never did I meet a woman more ardent, more voluptuous, more energetic in *a tête a tête*. We heard a noise, and I had some difficulty to snatch myself from her arms ; but what charmed me most, was the promptitude with which she resumed her air of calm and languor. The Italian the most intelligent, would have been the dupe of it. Aye, aye, commend me to women for change of decoration. They have faces that whip off and on in an instant ; and it is one of their attributes for which I have the greatest veneration.

I blessed my good fortune, wrapt myself up in the contemplation of it, but could not conceive how it arrived. Our peaceable *amatore*, who was returned, display-

ed

ed his pictures, sought for the best light, and hung them up under the eyes of his dear help-mate, who all the time looked like one of Guido's virgins, such was her air of innocence.

Presently he sallied forth to make a second voyage; directly *Madone* puts herself in rout, and arrives a second time in my apartment. The inviting *eccomi!* was not forgotten. I took care how I complain'd of so sudden a return; but at the same time, I endeavoured to acquit myself in such a manner as I thought would set me free for the day. But not at all. The husband makes a third voyage, and the lady a third visit.

I now began to recover from my enchantment. I wished my amiable friend to have a little more moderation; and could not help begging of her, to spare me another *eccomi*, though her husband should again go abroad. She had some difficulty to comprehend what I meant, and fell into a reverie, which otherwise would have given me no uneasiness. I was

sure that I had not failed in any of the essential requisites; and at length she left me to caress her husband, who felicitated himself before me, the same evening, above an hundred times, on having so faithful a spouse.

Well, my dear Duke, what do you say to this good fortune? Since the heat of our first *rendevouz*, the *eccomis* have been fewer, because the excursions of my host have not been so frequent; however, they come round from time to time, and I resign myself. At present I am callous to the wife's allurements; it is no longer any thing but the confidence of the husband that delights me; and I find more pleasure in playing upon the credulity of the one, than enjoying all the charms of the other.

You see I have not forgot your doctrine, and that I extend the glory of France, as far as it depends on me, with my utmost vigour. I am, moreover, exceedingly edified by all you say to me. The vengeance you exercise upon Madame

dame de Syrc, is of a kind new and ingenious. It is a feature that wants in the character of Lovelace; of which character, by the bye, though defective in one particular, the public say not half enough; it has always interested me extremely.

As for your Englishwoman, I feel as well as you, that it is absolutely necessary you should have her, let it cost what it will. If speedy means be not taken to prevent it, the suburbs of Paris will be peopled with nothing but virtue in petticoats; and by an infallible consequence, the contagion will soon gain the center of the town. But who is this Count de St. Albin? He must certainly have some disposition to amiable iniquity, since you chuse him for your avenger; and if I was in his place, I think I would punish Madame de Syrcè cruelly. According to the picture you have given me of her, she deserves no mercy.

How I envy you! You are at the fountain head of all the pleasures, while I am a melancholy exile in this holy land,

in the midst of another Palestine, where I have not even the satisfaction of killing Saracens. You did not expect this bit of erudition, perhaps ; but I am obliged to my uncle for it, who often talks to me of the expedition of St. Louis, Richard the First, and the noble massacres that were committed in former times for the glory of the faith, and the salvation of mankind.

The good old gentleman is always the same. In the morning he addles himself with diplomatic calculations. He dines, where he sits at table as long as he can. After dinner, and a slight doze in his elbow-chair, he plays gravely at chess ; and though he constantly looses, he always maintains, that it is not through the fault of his combinations. Play over, and digestion completed, he begins to think of his soul, and goes to visit the churches. Mercy on me, if I fall in his way during one of his fits of fervor ! The other day nothing would serve him, but I must watch his afternoon's nap. He pretends that at those times many things escape from him
which

which might be highly useful to government ; and he advises me to take notes of them, under the title of, *The Polite Dreams of a French Gentleman*. Such a book, says he, will be of great service to all dreamers that would reform administration ;—but here am I, without considering it, doating as well as my uncle ; and you have something else to do than read my nonsense.

Adieu, my dear Duke. I burn to enlist myself and march under your banners.

L E T T E R XIII.

From the Duc de CLERMONT, to the
Count de St. ALBIN.

IN a thousand years, Monsieur le Comte, I should not have divined the degree of interest you take in the Chevalier de Gerac ; and nothing less than the warmth with which you charge yourself with his apology, was necessary to open my eyes. I sincerely ask your pardon for the indif-

creet vehemence with which I inveighed against him ; and I hope you will allow my repentance to be a sort of reparation. You are in the right of it ; that man will certainly become, one day or other, an excellent citizen ; but, as you say yourself, I do not apprehend he is likely to arrive at those less eminent qualifications necessary to shine in courts : for the rest we are in an age of miracles. But let us have done with your Pelades, and talk of other matters.

You will see by this letter, that I am not so strangely wedded to my own opinion as you thought me. As ardently as I formerly press'd you to pursue the conquest of Madam de Syrcè, I now exhort you to a quite contrary procedure. The most knowing eye is sometimes deceived. Neither natural intelligence, nor the clue of experience, will always answer the fantasticalness of events. I thought I could distinguish that the marchioness was not very far from having a slight *tendre* for you ; and that was all we desired ; we
wanted

wanted no more ; that little opinion would have brought us as far as we thought proper ; but I find you would be wrong to flatter yourself with any such hopes. Decypher women if you can : this is the fact.

In a cause which it is unnecessary to name, the conversation lately fell upon the young men that are most talked of. You were named. Some of the women present (and those *connoisseurs*) maintained that you possessed all the requisites to please. Madame de Syrcè spitefully contradicted them. She put a negative upon every thing that was said in your favour. She found fault with your humour, your person ; nay, she even criticised your face, which she went so far as to call sheepish. One of the assembly modestly insinuated, that you were master of the art of seduction. Upon which your merciless antagonist burst into a violent roar of laughter, that disconcerted the whole *Areopagus*. It was not her fault, if you had one tolerable quality left. In a word, I am assured she began with disdain,

and ended with downright malice. This, I take it, is a marked antipathy. But what will you have? the most amiable men are ofteneft the objects of female execration.

I thought it right to advertife you of a scene, in which you have been interested, and even engaged. All you have to do for the future, is to fee Madame de Syrcè no more. Forget her; and by a noble difregard of it, punifh her indecent extravagancies. It is true, ſhe is pretty; but that is not enough; ſhe ſhould alfo be juſt, and not accuſe a man of being awkward and inſufficient, without having proofs that he is ſo.

Adieu, my dear Count.

L E T.

LETTER XIV.

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Chevalier de GERAC.

MY dear Chevalier, I called at your lodgings this morning, but you were gone out. I wished you had not been such an early man. I wanted to find you. You would have seen me in a fine passion; but I defy you to guess the reason.

Madame de Syrcè—you know what I think—what I have said to you of her; you know with what enthusiasm I have always talk'd of her, even while I was resolved to forget her. Well, this Madame de Syrcè is my most mortal enemy. She has declared herself against me, with a virulence that has hardly an example. It is nothing to have been for some time the sport of her coquetry; I am the object of her derision. She hates me; but why, I know not. What have I done, but prais-

ed her beauty, and on her account given myself up to the most painful distractions, of which you have been witness. She hates me, when, perhaps—but in the first place let me tell you, this is no vague conjecture, it is a fact.

In a very numerous circle, she took the party against me. All the good that was said of me, she denied ; and made herself so particular by the outrageous marks of her aversion, that it was taken notice of, and has been repeated. I should not give credit to this, but the recital, (which at least would have appeared exaggerated) acquires evidence, when I reflect on her frozen looks, the dryness of our conversations, and that kind of constraint which she shews with nobody but me.

I was half tempted to have satisfaction for all this ; and make use of every weapon against her, which a man who knows the world can oppose to the pride of a coquet ; but on cooler consideration, I determine to command my temper. At first, I confess, the behaviour of the marchioness

chioness put me in a passion ; but I soon grew calm ; and here I am, perfectly quiet, and perfectly cured.

Nay, to tell you the truth, I am not sorry that she has herself taken the bandage from my eyes. Who knows, but that for this little incident, some other kind of uneasiness might have continued in my mind about her, which in the end would have destroyed my peace.

That is now no longer to be feared. I hear her name without emotion. My poor kind Hamilton reigns in a heart all her own ; another image no more mixes itself there with hers. I wake no more with the remorse of hesitating between two impressions, nor longer think of ravishing my first affection from the sole object that deserves it. Thus then Madame de Syrcè shall triumph : her enmity shall have a free course. I will remain the silent victim of it, and sacrifice to her even my vengeance.

Yet tell me sincerely, Chevalier, do you think it would be much a crime, to
 prove

prove to her, that I am not so entirely void of address, as she is pleased to imagine? to draw her by degrees to the necessity of a disavowal, and to acquire the right of being indiscreet, in order to give afterwards the greater lustre to my discretion? Would there be any injustice to Hamilton in punishing her rival? and to convince her, that I can be happy with her, without ceasing to follow another?

There is something in the combination that pleases me, and I believe it innocent. What say you? Let your principles alone, and judge my position without prevention. My head is, I know not how; a hundred ideas crowd my brain, and I am unable to fix: all I clearly can perceive is, that I no longer love Madame de Syrcè. But what do I say? I never loved her. I deceived myself when I imagined I did so, and all my visions vanish.

Adieu. This is a strange rambling letter. Come to me, or write to me. I cannot unravel the meaning of Madame
de

de Syrcè's conduct. Own yourself that it is singular. What ought to be mine?

LETTER XV.

From the Chev. de GERAC to the Count
de ST. ALBIN.

CAN it be possible? What! the prattle of a frivolous woman, or at least one that passes for such, turn your head, pique your sensibility, and excite your resentment! Besides, is it entirely certain that she has talked of you as you have been told? have the reporters made no alteration in her discourse? And then, my dear Count, do you believe yourself more than other men, exempt from those trifling mortifications? Women are free speakers; they may say what they please: it is our part to put a just value on it.

After reading your letter, I might, if I would, suppose you absolutely mad in love with the marchioness; but your heart is only out of order, and I rather chuse to ascribe

ascribe the whole to an offended self-love. You had a whim, it has not been satisfied; at our age such disappointments are vexatious, and that vexation is a new triumph for the woman that baulks us.

You ask me, if I think it would be wrong in you to counterfeit a passion, in order to usurp rights, and make yourself the master of conditions? Yes, my dear Count, I do think it would be wrong, highly wrong; especially in you who are a man of nice feelings, and ought to blush to obtain by fraud what is due only to sincerity. Question your heart candidly, and abide by its answer; I desire no more; but, indeed, I find the Duc de Clermont in this project, and not you at all. Believe me, whenever we pretend to be what we are not, we do not revenge, but punish ourselves.

For Heaven sake, when a man is happy as you are, why meddle with those little intrigues which fatigue the heart, stain it, rob it of that delicacy, that interior charm without which our enjoyments cease to be pleasures? Continue to possess quietly
what

what a rational love bestows you, and do not worry yourself, by striving for what it will not allow.

Make no bustle; see the marchioness, but seldomer than formerly; shew her no marks either of sorrow or anger, and conduct yourself so well, that she may blush in comparing you with those to whom she has given the preference. This is the only revenge, the only triumph worthy of you.

I fear not to displease you, because I know the bottom of your character—the friend of virtue. If through the eagerness of your temper you are sometimes drawn from it, you are ready to return the moment you are called back. It is my office to be the warning voice, and it is with pleasure I acquit myself of it.

L E T.

LETTER XVI.

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Chevalier de GERAC.

I CANNOT get at the clue of Madame de Syrcè's character. That woman makes me desperate mad; and I am satisfied I should do right in absolutely forgetting her. Urge it to me no more, my friend; I tell you I am convinced that would be the best way. But I must talk to you of her once more, for the last time; it is necessary you should be acquainted with the incredible reception she gave me yesterday.

According to your advice, I had stifled all resentment. My countenance was calm, my heart still more so; and in that peaceable disposition I went to find her; determined with myself not to give her the least suspicion that I thought I had any reason to complain. They told me she was at her toilet, and could not be
seen,

seen, but that she would soon be in her mother's apartment, who was at home, and received company. I went up, where I found Madame Sancerre alone, at her embroidery. This lady has the fire of the old Count, an easy politeness, a noble familiarity, and an excellent understanding; but she has a face which my respect for her cannot prevent my finding a little disagreeable.

She asked me a great many questions; and taking some interest in me, though I knew not why, she began to preach. Every thing she said was reasonable; and I feel it so; but notwithstanding, never sermon was so impatiently listened to. I expected a pretty woman, and no signs of her appeared.

At last, at the end of an everlasting hour, down came Madame de Syrcè; handsome as an angel, and dressed with her greatest elegance. She made me a number of excuses, full of concern, or rather embarrassment. Spoke to me a few incoherent nothings; and, rising in an instant

instant after, said it was *horrible* to make me wait so long, and *shocking* to leave me so soon; with which words, and a cold salute, she made her exit, or, to speak more properly, her escape.

Tell me, would you be easy in my place? I never saw her look half so divinely: her image has never quitted me since. I would forget her. I had taken the resolution: but how can I keep it? it will be, in all respects, better to revenge myself; and endeavour to recover her favour, and please her at any rate. Leave me two hours with her mother, and scarce deign to recompence me with a moment's conversation! She said she was going to the opera; but that was all a pretext; for I ran after her there, and no where could see her: so in what box could she mysteriously place herself? You see all this is decisive.

Would you believe it? as soon as she set eyes on me she blushed as red as scarlet; and, considering every thing, indeed I do not wonder at it. But though I cannot at
present

present develope the cause of her abhorrence of me, I will find it out ; that I am resolved. You will think me extravagant, I know you will ; and I am so ; but happily my folly has no danger in it. I am picqued, I allow ; but by Heavens ! I am not in love. I should never forgive myself, was I capable of such a weakness. But a man knows not what he may become ; and it is to prevent such a ridiculous consequence that I determine to put my project in execution, and be wicked in my turn. Your timorous consciences never succeed among the women. The Duc de Clermont is a proof. He deceives them all, and they all run after him.

But a propos of my friend the Duke. What is it you have done to him ? not that he has said any thing particular about you ; but I am not satisfied with his air when I speak of you. If you can come to me to-morrow morning, I shall stay at home on purpose ; if not, don't fail to write to me ; but take this along with you, you must give me no more advice :
for

for that, the season is over ; and I am determined to follow my own head. This little excursion will prevent my going greater lengths. In a word, I must become half culpable, that I may not be entirely so.

But, after all, is not Madame de Syrcè a strange woman ?

LETTER XVII.

From the Chevalier de GERAC to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

YOU tell me I must give you no more advice ; and yet, believe me, my dear Count, you never stood in greater need of it. With what facility your imagination takes fire ! for, do not deceive yourself, it is that which is affected, and the disgrace will fall upon your heart.

You are determined, then, to seduce, cheat, and corrupt your pleasures in advance, by making falsehood their principle. When we sport with the misfortunes

tunes of two persons at a time, we run the risque of being very unfortunate in our turn ; and we deserve to be so. We think ourselves only trifling, and we become barbarous. One circumstance draws on another ; our feeling grows defective ; and the enjoyment of a moment poisons a whole life.

Only reflect a little upon the approaching situation of that unhappy young woman, Mademoiselle Hamilton. Figure her to yourself, as it were, alone in nature, without parents, without protectors, filling her gloomy retreat with sighs and tears, while nobody answers ; lamenting the day she first knew you, the day in which she first sealed her confidence in your promises by the weakness that undoes her : what she has lost will be continually before her eyes ; she will have every thing to afflict, and nothing to console her. Fix your thoughts a moment, I say, upon this melancholy object : you will shudder, and thank the friend that has held it up to you. Reject not this image, disagreeable as it may

may be ; rather let it penetrate your heart, and re-warm, while it enlightens it. I will not, I cannot, I dare not, believe that you love the Marchionefs de Syrcè ; A swell of pride only carries you towards her ; and to that tranſient motive you are to ſacrifice every thing.

Where is the glory to ſubdue a coquet ? and why take ſo much pains to conſummate a ſhameful treaſon ? for I confeſs, if Madame de Syrcè is no other than ſhe is thought, ſhe is not worth the riſk of making you unjuſt and cruel : but if appearances wrong her, which may very poſſibly be the caſe, what abſolution will you be able to adminiſter to yourſelf, for the heinous ſin of ſeducing her ? I know you ; I ſee you after it, in all the torments, the horrors of the moſt excruciating repentance.

Theſe pangs, my dear Count, are yet at a diſtance from you, and it is ſtill in your power to prevent their ever reaching you. Let not then my friendship diſguſt, while you may make a wholeſome uſe of it : tho'
ſtrict,

strict, it is far from being severe; and at the same time that it is ready to oppose all your actions that may injure you, it is ready to mourn your weaknesses. My reason is all in my heart, and ought to have nothing in it to frighten you.

On the contrary, fear those who talk to you in any other language than mine: fear those, who abusing exterior dignity, display the tolerations of custom, and a specious but fatal jargon too much in use, to fascinate those already verging towards error, to turn into ridicule the ties of conscience and honour, and insensibly destroy in hearts form'd for probity, the precious instincts of nature. I shall be sorry if you fail to find the likeness of this portrait. We ought to know our enemies.

You ask me what I have done to the duke: I have found him out. Through the vain decorations, and tinsel elegance of the courtier, I have discovered the man. There are a certain sort of characters that we punish in divining; and the duke is of the number. I never meet him, but my

features assume, of themselves, the expression of contempt. It is a sure and secret weapon, that mortifies him, and revenges me. Nor am I imposed upon by his sarcastic wit ; which I take for the mask of insignificancy. The first time I was in his company, he charged me with that sort of insolent politeness, that marked his superiority and my subordination ; but I received it so coldly, that I soon gained the advantage he wanted to take, and obliged him to descend to that equality he was endeavouring to destroy. The more I am willing to render to others, the less I would have them exact ; and he appeared to me altogether exacting : however he is so little used to esteem, that it is not surprising he should be desirous of homage ; but that is a thing I am never prodigal of ; and I beg you will imitate my example.

Though yet too young to be thoroughly master of the ways of men, I think I should naturally distrust those, who degrade themselves for ever with the rational

tional part of their species, to acquire a false and transitory consequence in the eyes of the libertine and foolish; who affect fame in the obscurity of petty intrigues; who think themselves persons of mighty consequence, because they are cited as great rakes, as heroes among the women; whose curiosity, however, they excite oftner than their passion. Is not this exactly your man of mode? in a word, your Duc de Clermont?

But you will tell me, he is a man of illustrious birth. Very well; and that's all. What service has he rendered the state? What good has he done his country? Is he husband, father, or citizen? Does he know or exercise the duties of a friend? To all these titles and respect he has no pretensions; and while he walks his restless weariness about society, he calls it by the fashionable name of dissipation. Pardon, once more, my dear Count, if I continue the picture to its full length. It is necessary you should see the whole figure; and while I hold the pencil, friendship only

G 2

directs

directs it. I find, with grief, that this man strives to mislead and corrupt you.

Do you remember the letter you writ to me about a month ago? you there gave way to your natural propensity: but how changed is your stile at present! However, your heart cannot be changed; and it is to that I address myself. I intreat you then, my friend, think of no new amours; you have already an amiable mistress; handsome, tender, sensible, and faithful. What would you desire more? Variety cannot give it you.

If your mind wants employment, turn it to worthy objects. You need but look about, to find a thousand honourable ways of rising into notice. Limit not your views to the narrow bounds of the capital. Be a man of the nation. Make your countrymen see what they may one day expect from you; and distinguish yourself from that miserable crowd of nobility, whose enervate youth offers a sickly ripeness, that never fails to end in early caducity; and

and deceiving the hopes of their fellow-citizens.

To conclude, my dear Colonel: Let you and I unite for the interest of virtue. The flower of that divine enthusiasm begins to be extinguished ; the love of glory hardly any longer exists. Let us determine to do nothing but for that ; to resist the prevailing torrent, and console the worthy and good, by the visible successes of our emulation. Of what prodigies are not two virtuous friends capable, when inspired by a great object ! Their force augments by their union. If one of them feels a weakness, the steadiness of the other is always ready to encourage and support him.

Farewell. I write to you from the country ; where they sent me your letter by an express. I shall be obliged to continue here two days ; but will not fail to see you as soon as I return to town.

LETTER XVIII.

From the Duc de CLERMONT to the
Count de St. ALBIN.

WHEN you were with me yesterday, I was under such particular engagements to go out, that I could not stay to reason with you as I would, upon all the articles of your confidence; but I have since had time for reflection, and that always gives zeal an additional strength.

And so, my good Sir, you can feel then! you have still some *quick* to your soul; and, at length, our fair lady has touched it. I give you joy with all my heart. I do not examine whether you love the Marchioness or not; that clause is by no means essential in our convention: the matter is, to have her, to make her an agreeable pastime, and afterwards return her to the wave that brought her to you. Is not this what we mean?

Begin

Begin then, by adopting the idea of Madame de Syrcè, that every one ought to have. Get into no high-flown esteem. There is nothing of which women are not capable; and perhaps, if she once caught you thereabouts, she might take it into her head to be perverse, merely to justify your sentiments. Vanity works upon women a thousand ways; and what would you not have to reproach yourself with, if, after dangling you about for years, now off, now on, between hope and despair, she should, at length, conclude nothing, or yield with all the damping grimaces of modesty?

It is a general rule, if you have a good opinion of a woman, never let her know it. While she thinks her prudence held at a cheap rate, she is at her ease, acts without constraint, and is not obliged to a stout defence when the decisive minute approaches. She calculates thus: "In granting, I lose nothing, and I gain time; the sooner our connection is formed, the sooner I shall be at liberty

“to break it, and form a new one.” I must also hint to you, that too much attendance and attention is by no means necessary.

They are ill acquainted with women who suppose they are to be fixed by the torpid langour of an humble submission, and the Platitudes of Madrigal : all that tires them. Contradiction, on the contrary, awakens, astonishes, and by making them angry, puts them in heart. They are obliged to a man who animates their looks, by giving them the fire of impatience ; that spurs their wit, by forcing it to dispute ; and renders himself odious, on purpose to be remembered by them : but I anticipate ; let us go regularly to work ; and commence, by drawing you from a state of discouragement. A noble confidence is a pledge of success.

I thought some time ago, as well as you, that the Marchioness had a sort of distaste to you ; but after a mature examination of the matter, I begin to see it in another light. That which appears to us
indif.

indifference, nay, antipathy, is nothing but inclination in a mask. I have met her several times since you have had occasion to complain of her : she has an air of pre-occupation. I have surprised her in moments of reverie, which are not natural to her. What can make a woman thoughtful at her age ? Her eyes, which were lively, are become languishing ; and you are certainly the cause of the metamorphosis. In fact, why does she avoid you ? and when she cannot conveniently do so, why such visible embarrassment and restraint ? She has only spoken ill of you, because she thinks too well.

I recollect an objection which you made me ; and really there appears something in it specious. If she is so light, so accessible, say you, so exercised in intrigue, why does she treat me with such distance, such reserve, such severity ? She has the greater mind to you. You are young, admired ; you may be run away with from her in an instant, and she would fix you fast by coquetry. But you seriously think,

G 5

perhaps,

perhaps, that she is at the beginning of her first adventure. How I laugh at your innocence ! Child that you are, sleep in quiet, and never let her virtue throw you into despair. She will neither suffer you to languish in the expectation of enjoyment, nor the insipidity of happiness, my life for it. I tell you again and again, if I have not had her, it is only a cause put off to a longer day. It is a pleasantry agreed between us. Twenty others are ready to depose in your favour, against your ridiculous fears. Let her alone : you shall no sooner have brought things to a fair conclusion, than she will be for the pleasure of breaking. The Marchioness is for *Pindaric liberty* ; she will take you, but on condition that she shall not keep you. It is only necessary that your connection should be known in the world, that people should be a little busy about it, make it the subject of discourse ; and when the affair has had its effect, she will drop her curtsy, you slide your bow, and, both turning off to your different
sides,

sides, you will enroll her upon your list; your successors will come to ask instructions of you; you will tell all you know; and so have perfectly satisfied every thing that decency requires.

Your amorous excursion thus at an end, you will be again at liberty to return to your Englishwoman, since you cannot resolve to have done with her. 'Tis true, I have hitherto chided you on her account; but I begin to be seriously affected with all you have told me about her; and indeed I must be moved to the very centre of my soul to approve a tenderness so uncommon. You will then, I say, return to her, since the fates have so decreed; and your heart, enlivened by a short tour of inconstancy, will be more capable of tasting all the poignancy of fidelity.

There is but one difficulty presents itself. I think you ought, out of pity to Hamilton, endeavour to deserve her. I say, out of pity to her, as well as regard to your own ease; for I suppose you would like to avoid the tumult of re-

proaches ; the train of sighs, tears, and the devil knows what ; which, though upon these occasions they cost a woman little or nothing, are horrible to a man that desires to keep his temper. But how is this to be done ? I have been meditating, and I think I have, at last, stumbled on an expedient. You shall introduce me to her ; and I answer for the rest. I will let all my own affairs stand still, in order to devote myself intirely to yours. The desire to oblige, to serve you, will every day suggest to me some new resource to divert the suspicions of your mistress ; to amuse her head, assure her heart, and keep her quiet while you are employed.

I fancy you must perceive how essentially necessary it will be that you should be served this way by some one or other, who knows the female character, and has the art to make himself believed. I mention myself, merely because I imagine nobody will enter so heartily into your interest, or take the same pains to acquit himself of the task. You may depend upon
it,

it, my visits shall never be rendered *mal a propos*. In the mean time, do you go on; see Madame de Syrcè; don't flatter her too much; and sometimes quarrel with her. The quarrel of one day never fails to give a zest to the meeting of the next. Be wild, frolic; make short visits; say not a word that betrays a settled intention. Seem always ready to slip through her fingers. The more at liberty you appear, the sooner you will have her in chains.

It would not be amiss, perhaps, if you were to get acquainted with some pretty woman, of whom the Marchioness is not over fond, and affect to follow her. These sort of secrets are familiar to all the world; but sometimes they succeed. Those that are less generally known should be reserved for the more important occasions. Why a pitched battle, when a skirmish only is necessary?

Adieu, Monsieur le Comte. Coolness and method is the word.

L E T.

LETTER XIX.

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Chevalier de GERAC.

MY dear Chevalier, I was at home yesterday when you called on me, but I was afraid to see you. A secret impulse made me get out of the way; and therefore my conscience tells me I had something guilty about me. And yet, believe me, I have said to myself, on the subject of Hamilton, a thousand times more than ever I heard from you. But that is my misery; I adhere to her, while I am drawn towards another.

You will tell me, no doubt, that the attraction may be resisted; and I so far agree with you, that my passion for Madame de Syrcè will certainly evaporate with time; but, till then, it tyrannizes: not even sleep allays its violence; my very dreams burn with her idea. Here is a woman I regard; there one I adore. I grieve for
this;

this; I languish for that; and though I think myself unfortunate in loving Hamilton no longer, I should see myself with transport in the arms of Madame de Syrcè.

I am satisfied you may oppose a thousand reasons against me; but reason has nothing to do in the case. I know the woman I possess is endowed with all the good qualities imaginable; but in what words shall I paint her rival? No words can do it. It is true, she has the character of being inconstant; and that character, in the present circumstance, is decisive. The Marchioness in making me happy, will oblige me to no sacrifice. She herself will restore me to the arms from whence she takes me. It is an error in her composition that she cannot help; and I must submit to it, whether I will or not. What harm will be done then? If, indeed, she was susceptible of a lasting passion—but, with the darts of Love, it seems, she has also his wings. What can you answer to this? You see, if I change for a little time, it is only to be constant for ever.

But,

But, my friend, it is out of your power to bring me back. Shall I confess it to you? I am gone too far. I had yesterday the imprudence to write to Madame de Syrcè, what I was no longer able to conceal from her. I have received no answer; and I am under the greatest inquietude. However, one thing is determined; the worse she treats me, the more obstinate shall be my pursuit of her. Spirit often carries us as great lengths as love. No doubt you must perceive, from the incoherence of my stile, that I am under infinite agitation: 'tis true. I neither know what I shall do, nor what I would have. I only think she might have honoured my letter with an answer, though ever so short. It might, perhaps, have vexed me; but her silence is insupportable.

Adieu, my dear friend. We are both in the age of passions. Pity me then. Hamilton I will never forsake; that depend upon. I will provide for her fortune, her tranquillity. But what do I talk?

talk? I give my mind a new bent only to make it recoil with greater force to its primitive position.

LETTER XX.

From the Duc de CLERMONT to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

A VERY pretty thing you have done, truly. One cannot let you a moment out of ones sight, but you go astray. Were you mad with your ridiculous declaration? It is a thousand to one but it knocks up the whole affair, or puts it back for a century. We must hazard every thing with women, but declare nothing to them, except our purpose to break off, or an infidelity : then the declaration becomes lively; and, made *a propos*, may afford a moment's diversion. But I give you joy. Depend upon it, the Marchioness now triumphs : she desires no more ; she has you in her pocket-book ; and there
you

you will remain among the dead, never to go farther.

How often must I repeat to you, that a woman should have granted us all, before we give her room even to suspect she is loved. You are civil to her ; continue to get her as often as possible alone ; throw into your looks a glance of desire that cannot be mistaken : she perceives it, and falls into a reverie ; and then you rouse her out of it by one of those *coup d'echat*, which does not leave them to think of a defence. Not that I would advise opening the siege with a storm ; in such petulance there would be something ignoble. There are decent delays that ought to be allowed to the virtue of women of a certain character ; or rather, to their imitations of virtue ; for the sex are admirable actresses ; and, above all things, prodigiously jealous of introductory ceremonials : but no man ever conducted himself like you.

Pr'ythee, my wise kinsman, what had you in your head when you took the pen in hand ? You thought she would answer you.

you. Well, and she has not done it? No, to be sure; what answer could she make you? You have ceased to be interesting; self-love is no longer unquiet about you; and the heart has nothing to say to you: but this is the consequence of walking without your guide, and acting of your own head. I can think of but one way of repairing the evil, in case it is reparable; and at any rate, I beg of you, write no more billet doux.

The Sardinian Ambassador gives a Ball next Saturday. Madame de Syrcè will infallibly be of the company, for she never fails; and as Madame de Thèmines is asked, she certainly will go too. This last must be useful to you. There is no having her; but she will serve the better for a snare to catch another.

Madame de Thèmines at least equals the Marchioness in figure: but what need I describe a woman you know? She is one of those starched, factitious beings that is all honesty and decorum; and enjoys, with a sort of voluptuous pride, the reputation

tation of being insensible. Such a woman gains respect, and has generally a train after her. You shall be one in the crowd. Take my advice.

Appear as magnificent as possible; strive to look your best: we will try issue; and Madame de Syrcè shall go for nothing. I know it will make her furious. Have I not passed my whole life in playing upon the passions of women? We will correct this lady, then; and teach her to answer a civil letter the next time a gentleman thinks proper to write her one.

LETTER XXI.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE, to her
Friend, Madame BREVAL.

HE has written to me, made an avowal of his sentiments; and I have read his letter with a satisfaction mixed with terror. Ah! my friend, the most delicate
love

love can enjoy nothing ; but virtue has every thing to fear.

Hitherto I have fought against my passion, which, buried in the bottom of my heart, has not yet appeared to the eyes of him that gave it birth. Uncertain of a reciprocal regard, I had only myself to vanquish ; but now I must triumph over a more redoubtable enemy. We have courage to suffer in our own persons ; but not to afflict what we love. As long as I thought the Count de St. Albin indifferent, whenever I saw him I affected a coldness that shielded me from his penetration. At present, that I know he feels what I feel myself, I can no longer promise to compose an exterior to deceive him. Alas ! if I am mistress of my tongue, will not my looks betray me ?

And why has he written to me ? He knows the ties by which I am bound ; he knows the duty of my station ; and he insults me if he doubts a moment of my continuing to fulfil them. Think as I may, I will act as I ought. Yes, my tender
and

and esteemed friend, tears may flow, and sighs may rise; but he shall be no witness of either. I will not have him to console me. A man beloved is a dangerous comforter; he heals with one hand, he wounds with the other; and the very succour we receive plunges deeper in the heart the poisoned weapon we want to extract.

But what inquietts me most, is, the opinion he must have of me. His letter is more expressive of ardor than sensibility; it is more lively than touching: it is rather the blaze of an inflamed fancy than the soft emanation of a heart that seeks to expand itself. If he has not the opinion of me I deserve; if he has been carried away by the scandalous reports of jealous women, which some men, engaged in their intrigues, have been complaisant, or rather been malicious enough to repeat; if—In short, you cannot imagine how this reflection distracts me! What have I to do with his love, unless I have also his esteem? I expect that those who are dear to me should

com-

compensate for the wrongs I suffer from society. Is it possible, then, that the Count de St. Albin can regard me with the same eyes of an indifferent world! and that he has undertaken to please me, on a presumption of the easiness of the task? It must be so; and if it was not my duty to avoid him, my pride tells me I ought to do it—if I can.

But, my dear friend, what will become of me? The first time I see him, how shall I look, how receive, how approach him? If he talks to me of his love, I shall die. I shall never be able to answer him; and I know not where to hide myself.

Behold the woman who has had so many amours laid to her charge; who, according to the annals of the good-natured world, has been engaged in so many gallant adventures, she trembles only at the sight of a man, for whom she has a weakness; the thought of him even terrifies her. She calls friendship to the assistance of reason; and reproaches herself with that passion, as a crime

crime of which she will never know any thing but the torments.

I attest Heaven and you, that the illegitimate love which I now discover to you in all its violence, is the first of the kind that ever occupied my heart. I gave that heart entire and unstained to the man to whom it was lawfully due ; and he never would have lost it, had he not repulsed my tenderness, by disorders which he did not even take the pains to hide from me. I should have been a faithful wife ; I will always be so : but why did not the Count respect that sacred title, unless he thought I had abjured it ? Yes, yes ; I already hate myself as if I was guilty.

To begin the hard struggle of love against love, I have not answered the Count's letter : and yet perhaps that has not been so well done. An answer engages to nothing, and it is a civility. If my silence should give him pain too—What do you think ? What ought I to do ? But I won't be told. Answer me nothing upon that article.

L E T.

LETTER XXII.

Madame de SYRCE to her Friend Ma-
dame BREVAL.

HEAVENS and earth! what a night!
I know not where I am. The tu-
mult is still in my ears; and my mind
was never so unquiet: yet, as I am, half
dead with fatigue, I cannot prevail with
myself to ly down, but must write to
you.

Of the ball I can give you no account;
for I have seen nothing there, except a
woman that was prodigiouſly followed,
and ſeemed ridiculouslly to engage all the
world. I defy you to gueſs who ſhe was.
Madame de Thèmines. For my part, I
could hardly believe my eyes; and ſhall
never come out of my aſtoniſhment. Not
but ſhe is handſome, has an elegance in
her figure, and a great deal of wit; but
then her character is ſo oppoſite to every
VOL. I. H thing

thing like what she appeared last night, that really it puts one almost out of temper.

Madame de Thèmines, you know, is a prude at two-and-twenty; piques herself upon severity of manners, and method in her conduct. All that you will say is, Very well. But she has forgot her principles. A nocturnal ball has turned her brain; and, indeed, the insolence with which she appeared to enjoy the rout she made, gave me but a sorry opinion of her understanding. The Duc de Clermont never left her elbow; and the Count de St. Albin (would you believe it, after his letter?) the Count de St. Albin was at her side all night. Nay, I thought he appeared more assiduous in his attendance than any one else. He several times gave her his arm; led her, and danced with her. They were applauded after an *alemande*; which I thought extremely indecent, to set people a clapping! Was it not, in fact, to mount the stage, and make themselves
a show

a show for the public? But, live and learn: you see what the world is come to.

You will, perhaps, be less surprized at the Count de St. Albin's conduct, when you are informed, that he is in love with Madame de Thèmines. Don't imagine this a conjecture of mine. I assure you it is fact. The *Présidente de Carnouille*, (who, you know, has a general knowledge of all those affairs that are going forward,) whispered me the secret. I heard it, I assure you, with a perfect *sang froid*. But what a man must the Count be, to write to me as he has done! to be guilty of a falsehood he was determined so soon to discover! What has been his design? It is certainly very strange treatment of me. How happy it is that I did not answer his letter; he would certainly have made an ill use of any advantage I gave him. He my friend! he is not capable of it. Is not that your opinion? though his countenance speaks so much candour and probity, and is so dangerously calculated to inspire confidence.

H 2

Yet,

Yet, while I blame him, he may not, perhaps, be wholly unjustifiable. That odious Duc de Clermont, the most abandoned of all men, was constantly in his company : and who knows but he may have acted by his example ; nay, perhaps, by his advice. This I am convinced of, if the Duke suspected I had the least kindness for the Count de St. Albin, he would have suggested such a piece of management to him : nay, he would not have scrupled to engage the whole ball against me, merely to make himself sport. I often caught his eyes turned upon me with a look that made me uneasy. But how should he suspect I think of the Count ? I have never exposed myself : but then he is such a monster ! and yet many women think him agreeable.

The best and only way will be to trouble myself about the Count no more. Deny him my door ; avoid meeting him ; forget his very name ; and leave an open field for the charms of Madame de Thèmines. She is so much handsomer than I,
that

that it would be absolute rashness in me to contest a conquest with her. Yet, how can one hear with patience the prudence of such a woman cried up? If you had but seen her last night, how she snuffed the incense that was offered her, how she provoked the men to homage! Good God! You know I am not apt to hate people; yet really she made me almost hate her.

I thought at first of writing to the Count, to desire an explanation of his conduct, and complain of the injurious manner in which he has treated me: but I have since considered, that will be better let alone. What I have seen is sufficient to open my eyes, and ought to restore me to myself. Yet, if he was attached to another, I believe you will allow he should not have endeavoured to persuade me.

But, pardon me, my friend; I see my secret uneasiness will escape, in spite of me: however, I am sure you feel; so I know you will excuse it.

I embrace you a thousand times. I am under such dejection of spirits, that if you feel this letter wet with my tears, you must not be surprised; they have never ceased to flow since I sat down to write it. I received two of your letters yesterday. What comfort they gave me! They paint your heart. But is it possible that your husband would prevent your corresponding with me? What unfortunate wretches we poor women are?

P. S. I should have told you that the Count never spoke, or so much as came up to me the whole night; he only made me a distant bow: but for that I was not sorry.

A BILLET

A BILLET

From the Count de ST. ALBIN, to the
Due de CLERMONT.

AH! my dear Duke, what have you made me do? Madame de Syrcè will never forgive me. Heavens! how beautiful she appeared! What dignity without pride! What graces without affectation! Madame de Thèmines is handsome; but how wide the difference! We cannot find fault fault with the one; while we can never admire the other sufficiently. And yet, I did not speak to her; you forced me to deny her those attentions, to which she alone was entitled. I must own I do not understand your policy; and the Marchioness must think me the most contemptible of men. How often was I upon the point of escaping, to make her my excuses? I burned to justify myself; and without you, (who, I knew not how, over-awed me), my heart was hers.

H 4.

last

last night, in spite of all obligations elsewhere ; and I would have told her so. I have written to Hamilton, and desired leave to present you ; but as yet I have had no answer. I am going to rest, if rest be compatible with the agitation of my spirits.

L E T T E R XXIII.

From Mademoiselle HAMILTON to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

THEY brought me a letter from you yesterday ; but what was a letter ? Is that to recompense your absence ? 'Twas you I expected ; 'twas you I desired. Tell me, how many years is it since I have seen you ? By my account, it should be a vast number ; and yet, perhaps, you will endeavour to persuade me it is but a few days. Well, our apprehension constitutes the essence of all that affects us ; and if days appear as years, are they

they not the same thing? However I regret, rather than accuse you.

Will you believe me? For this week past I have not perceived that the sun shone. The obscurity has been frightful; the cold insupportable. I have shut myself up in my chamber with your letters, and your picture; and my harpsichord, my work, and reading, have intirely employed me. Yet, why do I say intirely? I have been a great deal employed in thinking upon you. Indeed, when is it I cease to think of you? But, for this last week, had my mind lost your image a moment, I know not where my consternation would have ended. You have used me too much to the sight of you: it is become necessary almost to my existence; and it is by your absence and return I now count time, the seasons: in short, I have no perceptions but through you: haste, then, to make me live again; for, till I see you, life is but another name for death.

Who is this Duke you want to introduce here? What have I to do with him? What would he have with me? I have an interest in but one man in the world: that man is you. You are my friend; and I desire to see no other. You know I pay small regard to titles. I measure the statue, not the pedestal. If I have any pride, it is only that of being loved by you. Besides, I think I have heard of the Duc de Clermont; and, as well as I remember, even those that praised him gave me the description of a frivolous and dissipated character.

How can you have the idea of bringing me such an acquaintance? Dispense, I beseech, with my receiving so disagreeable a visit. If I must have the pain to think the solitude of this retreat no longer supportable to you; if my company alone cannot sufficiently enliven it; rather search for some prudent and agreeable person of my own sex, who shall always be here to meet, and keep you from weariness. Ah! my friend, can I think
you

you tired of me? If you are so, for pity's sake, be cautious how you let me know it: open the dreadful secret to me by degrees; and, if possible, teach me, by the tenderness with which you shew me my misfortune, to support it.

Yet think not that I will live to be a burden to you; no; the moment I am satisfied that I have ceased to make you happy, that moment shall determine the fate of my life. I am yours, while you are mine; but, mine no longer, an eternal barrier rises between us. Love and honour joined us; and our union shall not subsist an instant upon any other basis. I shall easily find a retreat; none can be too gloomy to hide my sorrow; and I will nourish it to death. These are my intentions. I hide nothing from you: I have nothing to hide.

Remember that this is the first mark of inquietude and distress you have ever perceived in me: and do you know from whence it proceeds? from the frequent

instances of thought in which I have lately surprized you.

Never be melancholy ; enjoy all the gaieties proper to your age ; but return, from time to time, to that tranquil felicity, which is no longer perfect when it has witnesses or confidants. Oh ! you, for whom I live ; soul of my soul ! why can I not pass my life at your feet, by your side, in your arms Continue to love me. You will never find one who so loves you

A B I L L E T

From the Duc de CLERMONT, in
answer to the Count de ST. ALBIN.

YOU know nothing of the matter, I tell you ; and I don't want that Madame de Syrcè should pardon you. I will have her mad, jealous to desperation ; and you shall make your advantage of it, to turn her as you please. I will teach you how to fascinate a woman ; to trouble
her

her sight by the vapours of self-love, and come upon her unawares, under favour of the cloud you have yourself raised. In this climate, where warm constitutions are rare, women seldom yield, unless through anger or vanity, or out of spite. In short, they must be possessed with some fury or other in the head; and I never fail to provide them with one. I lay twenty *louis* the Marchioness has not slept a wink since we saw her; and you and the De Thèmines have the honour of the *insomnia*. She thinks you, with that prude, at the eve of a capitulation; and will go half way to the devil to keep you asunder. Besides, the De Thèmines shone last night, and will be talked of to-day; which is a horror not to be suffered. Have a care of writing; if you attempt that, you will lose all the effects of the finest disposition that ever was made; a disposition which I reckon among my most celebrated *manœuvres*. With what art did I engage, last night, the old Presidente, as an out-scout, to deceive
the

the enemy! and, in fine, how adroitly did I carry a conquest from a lady, which she entered the ball with the idea of having already gained. You must press your *Angloise*. There is an absolute necessity for my being impowered to divert any storm that may arise in that quarter. No matter for the plague; I will submit to it. Courage! fellow-soldier, courage! Like an expert general, in the front, the flanks, the rear, I will be everywhere myself; and I dare engage we shall return from our expedition covered with laurels.

L E T T E R XXIV.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE, to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

I HAVE hitherto deferred answering your letter, Monsieur le Comte, because I had nothing to say in return; but as I hear Madame de Thèmines finds your visits by much too frequent at my house,

house, I at length determined to break the silence, in order to serve you both ; and I beg you to believe, that I readily sacrifice the pleasure of now and then seeing you, to the tranquillity of a person, for whom you appear to have so great a regard as the lady in question. So you see I am generous.

And now my hand is in, let me profit of this opportunity to tell you, that I not only pardon the protestations you have been pleased to make me in your epistle, but the falsity of those protestations : not but the last would most heinously offend me, (because a proof of your slight opinion of me) if your opinions were capable of affecting me one way or other ; but, thank Heaven ! I find resources in my own breast to counterbalance the injustice of those who are strangers to me. And indeed, supposing the Count de St. Albin had any weight with me ; after what I have seen, what I have heard, nay, I may say, after what I positively know, I should only be glad to be undeceived ; and perhaps,

haps, regretting a premature judgment too much in his favour, rather be sorry for him, than myself.

And here let me add a piece of advice, in order to give a dignity to your passion: endeavour to render it less public. Your indefatigable assiduity in following the lady; your eyes fixed on nobody but her; the expression of hers; in a word, all proclaimed what ought to have been kept more secret for her glory, and, it may be, for yours.

It is not very long, I fancy, since the world began to talk of you and Madame de Thèmines. It is possible, however, that, being little apt to observe the actions of others, I may be mistaken in the æra of your happiness: and whatever its date, (a circumstance in which I am wholly unconcerned) nobody can do other than applaud the ardor of your assiduity. Continue it, Monsieur le Comte; continue it, by all means; you certainly can never be prodigal of your attentions to a more meritorious object. She has beauty, wit, and,

and, I am told, a most amiable temper. But how comes it, then, that the mortal she has selected to make happy, can be capable of a moment's distraction? that engaged by a woman who merits all his care, he should endeavour to attract another, who certainly did not expect it; who never showed him any signs of a favourable disposition; and whose pretended coquetry was never at the smallest pains to draw him to such a desertion?

I believe you will find it a little difficult to justify yourself; and indeed, notwithstanding my pride, might find some satisfaction in your attempt. I dispense with the justification: it would lay you under the necessity of a second insincerity; and I would not willingly expose myself to the hazard of losing all esteem for you.

L E T.

LETTER XXV.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE to her
Friend Madame BREVAL.

THE affair at the ball has been confirmed to me. A gentleman I saw yesterday told me all the particulars of the intrigue. The Count de St. Albin loves Madame de Thèmines : but what will appear incredible to you, the woman is jealous of me, jealous to a degree ; and talks of me in such terms. However, she will talk no more, that's my comfort.

I have written to the Count de St. Albin, and I am sure you will not blame me for it. I have forbid his visits, and that you will say was but right ; for why should I be the obstacle to another's happiness ? Let him love Madame de Thèmines ; I dare swear I shall be easy about it in a little time : and till I am, I can weep with you. You must see that the Count is a miracle of falsehood ! but my great pain
is,

is, that while I regret I cannot detest him. Ah! my friend, the heart he has insulted deserves kinder treatment!

Had you beheld me yesterday morning, while that cruel visiter was relating me the history of their amour with all the inhuman exactitude of an executioner, you could not have helped pitying me. I felt my colour come and go; I could scarcely fetch my breath; and a heaviness gathered at my heart. He even seemed to take a malignant satisfaction in giving me pain. He dwelt upon every circumstance; and yet, I know not why, (for I asked him nothing) he brought up the subject himself. Is it possible that the whole world, without knowing it, should be united against my peace? It looks very like it.

But why, why should I not be glad to adopt, to embrace every thing capable of fortifying my reason; every thing that can give me arms against a danger, of which I cannot be too apprehensive? The Count's behaviour has been, at once, atrocious and extravagant. It cannot be
put

put in too strong a light ; it is impossible to aggravate it ; and I ought to be inspired with horror for such a man. Nay, it is my interest to think him culpable, though he should not be so. But I know not how it is, my thoughts are no longer connected ; and I am unable to give a distinct account of what passes within myself. Terror, indignation, a gleam of hope, a repentance of that hope, the courage of my projects, the in consequence of my resolutions, all these torments assail my heart at once ; but I will see the Count no more ; of that be satisfied.

My letter is very cold ; it is almost cruel ; so cruel that if I had it in my possession again I think I should not send it. . . . I am sorry it is gone. Who can tell how far he may interpret it to my disadvantage ? But I am mad ; I abhor myself ! Let him interpret it as he will—Gracious God, how I am to be pitied !—and yet I excite envy, and Madame de Thèmines is jealous of me !

L E T.

LETTER XXVI.

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Marchionefs de SYRCE.

WHAT have I read? and is it you
Madam? is it you that writ me
the letter I have juſt received, in which I
am condemned to the moſt inhuman of pu-
niſhments, and my ſentence is pronounced
upon appearances; which, though I confeſs
them againſt me, ought not to be ſo cruel-
ly interpreted? You are determined then,
to make me feel, in all its violence, the
excruciating torture of loving in ſpite of
myſelf; of loving without hopes; of be-
ing the object of her contempt, whoſe
good opinion alone I value. But be it ſo;
I feel I am your ſlave, and load me with
what calamities you will, I muſt continue
my ſervitude.

Yet let me preſume to ſay, that the man
you accuſe, the man you forbid your ſight,
the man who has been always odious to
you,

DELICATE CRIMES.

you, is not unworthy of your esteem. Hear me, I beseech you, out of pity to a grief the sincerest that ever penetrated a heart. I neither love, nor ever loved Madame de Thèmines ; I am not sufficiently happy therefore to have a sacrifice to offer you. If I followed her at the ball, it was a mere folly on my part ; an accident which I know not how to explain. You, and only you I adore ; when I dared to tell you so, I was forced to it ; I was unable any longer to contain myself ; and perhaps that avowal would touch you, if you could read my thoughts--if you knew how they are at this moment distracted.

Since my first letter, I have not had an instant's repose ; the passion that devours me cannot but render me unfortunate : but I repeat, I have not force to vanquish it. The contagion is in your lips, your eyes, your motions ; your discourse, your silence inspire it : you act at once upon the imagination, the understanding ; it is in vain to fly, it is impossible to escape you. An undefinable grace follows you everywhere,
accom-

accompanies you, mixes itself with all you do; and your slightest action is a snare laid for the liberty of those that approach you. If you are thoughtful, we love your melancholy; if you are gay, nothing so charming; in fine, you have a thousand methods to please; all different, and all infallible. Cease then to think me false, since it is a crime I cannot be guilty of; shock me not too much with your unkindness, but lament me; for I am an object of compassion.

There are certain situations where even honesty is a torment to the heart that cherishes it. Recall to your mind, Madam, the eagerness with which I first sought you; in remembering my homage, you will also remember your own disdain, and the bitterness with which you declared yourself against me in a numerous company, who no doubt received the impressions you strove to give them; for what, that you attempt, can be fruitless? You will remember this, I say; Madam, enjoy the recollection, and by putting you in mind

mind of it, I procure a new satisfaction to your animosity.

What have I done to deserve your hatred? Allow me at least to endeavour to destroy the disadvantageous ideas you have conceived of me, since I am forbid your presence. In pity, suffer me to write to you. I dare not expect to be answered; but at least I shall have the consolation to tell you, to repeat to you, over and over again, that I am devoted to you, though no words can tell you how much. Believe in the oath of Love. Madame de Thèmines never had the smallest right in my heart; and it is sufficient to have known you, to shut out her and all the world for ever.

L E T T E R XXVII.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE to her
Friend Madame BREVAL.

LET the universe be at the feet of
Madame de Thèmines! I care not;
the

the only man I am anxious about, is not to be found there; nor will he ever. The Count de St. Albin is innocent. How unjust then have I been, and you, who fall upon him with such intolerable rancour? "More timid than the Duke," you say, "he has all his principles." That is absolutely barbarous. What has he done to you? or did you mean to vex me? But, my dear, pardon me; I owe you acknowledgments, and I pay you with reproaches. I implored the assistance of your friendship, and I complain of its coming to my aid; thus I am always a contradiction with myself. But you will excuse, I know you will, and not abandon me to the disorders of a head totally wandering, and the emotions of a heart which threaten me with yet greater disasters.

Yes, it is there the enemy is lodged; it is there I feel his image not to be removed, and it will remain there fixed for ever. You see I am entirely lost. But continue, if you can, to talk against the Count; I give you leave; however, don't

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I

think

think ill of him, because he does not love Madame de Thèmines; that I am confident of; and indeed when I consider every thing, it would be wonderful he should. Madame de Thèmines has features, I allow; but then her beauty is moderate, and not of that kind to turn heads: besides, the Count has sworn to me that he never had a thought of her: and he has that air of integrity that forces belief. I cannot deny it. The style of his last letter has affected me greatly. It so strongly paints the painful state of his mind, that all his troubles have passed into mine.

Yet, perhaps, it would be less dangerous for me, if I had still somewhat to reproach him with. I feel it would. He desires leave to write to me. After my groundless suspicions, ought I to afflict him by a refusal, which I have reason to think would throw him into despair? Would you have me? for my part, I can determine nothing. Love and prudence are hard to reconcile. My love gets the better of my reason, or rather my reason
is

is gone. My duty fades in my eyes, or I see it through a cloud that almost hides it. You have loved, and will find your own situation retraced in mine.

But how should we not love? Unhappy creatures! those to whom our parents deliver us, tyrannize over, or abandon us. At first we ease our sorrows with our tears; by little and little those become less abundant, and at length ill treatment entirely stops their course. The heart endeavours to amuse itself, by forming agreeable chimeras; it seeks an object to realize them: the redoubtable form presents itself; our trouble announces it; we fear, we fly, and meet it at every turn. Wary with ineffectual struggles, our terrors become weaker; we are even assiduous to get the better of them, and at the brink of the precipice we see only the flowers with which it is bordered. Alas! amidst the perils that surround, and the miseries that overwhelm, what can become of us? We are generally more to be pitied than blamed. Our faults have almost always

their issue in our misfortunes. For myself, I have a fatal boding that tells me I shall be undone ; that I am hastening to destruction. In that case defend my memory, for I am sure I shall not long outlive it.

P. S. I forgot to tell you one thing. Somebody has made the Count believe that I have most grossly abused him. What vile people there are in the world ! it would be frightful to let him remain in an opinion so false. He fancies also that I hate him. Great God ! I am under the necessity of writing to him. I will not tell him I love him ; but there is no law obliges me, as I take it, to tell him he is the object of my aversion.

L E T.

LETTER XXVIII.

From the Marchionefs de SYRCE to the
Count de St. ALBIN.

I AM under a neceſſity to write to you. I am obliged to juſtify myſelf from a calumny, and give a falſehood the lie. It is not true, Monsieur le Comte, be aſſured it is not, that in an aſſembly I rail'd againſt you. Some one has impoſed upon you. You are credulous, and unjuſt to yourſelf; which I can hardly pardon, though I ſhall be more indulgent for what relates perſonally to me.

I ſee you are very far from being acquainted with my character. The world has given you a wrong impreſſion of it. Perhaps you ought not to have taken your impreſſion from the world. In ſine, I am ambitious of your ſuffrage, and I am glad of an opportunity to tell you, that I hold calumny in abhorrence, and pity the malicious. Perſecution has not ſour'd me.

I would even spare absent persons, though they had offended me. I would commend them, if they had virtues ; I would commend them without pardoning them. I am even the friend to handsome women as much as I can ; and taking pleasure to give praise to all, as far as they merit, you can hardly doubt of my testifying my approbation of you.

But I forget to speak to you of Madame de Thèmines. Explanations are never at an end. What will you have ? I gave credit to public report, and perhaps I had better stick there. However, you don't love her ; you assure me of it. But when one finds one can deceive one's self, one does not know how to believe any thing. Yet I cannot see why you should be so uneasy. A suspicion of your being in love, does not, that I can perceive, call your probity at all in question.

Your desiring permission to write to me, embarrasses me strangely. If I refuse, on the footing we are at present, you will persist in placing me on the roll of your enemies :

enemies : you will think me implacable, and say a thousand hard things of me. Well, Monsieur le Comte, I am content to grant you a mark of my esteem ; and the style of your letters shall convince me whether you deserve it.

L E T T E R XXIX.

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Chevalier de GERAC.

MY dear Chevalier, your letters contradict, but your silence afflicts me. There's an end of it ; I am engaged ; I have writ to her, and she has answered me. But what engagement, with an uneasy mind ? I am not content with myself. I aspire to a happiness I dread to possess ; and while I tremble lest I should fail, cannot think of my success without a foretaste of remorse.

I have received a letter from Hamilton, the most touching in the world. It made me sad for a whole day. It even brought

tears into my eyes. But in grieving for her, I betray her. She is, however, far from harbouring any suspicion ; but I am convinced that if ever she knows of the present affair, the world will not be able to prevent her leaving me ; and I believe I should not have fortitude to bear the loss. She is unhappy without knowing it ; yet, am not I more ? Though, why so ? if the pernicious passion that harrasses me is only a transitory fancy, a wind that rises to loose itself in the air, and be no more seen ? Madame de Syrcè is, no doubt, such as she has been described to me ; and in that case, as you have observed yourself, her reign will be but short ; and once at an end, Hamilton's will begin again.

I wish you had seen the Marchioness at the last ball : she eclipsed all the women round her. There appeared a majesty in her charms, that I hardly imagined her capable of assuming. And what, thought I, am I reduced to desire ? that so delicate a creature should renounce honour and honesty, and degrade herself by one of those

those fatal foibles, the shame of which is as lasting as its pleasures are momentary. I thought thus with myself—blushed—and continued to desire.

Oh madness of the human heart! unconceivable contrariety! Pity your friend, and tell me, tell me, would you not in the same case be the same thing? Yes, you would, you must; and I exaggerate a fault which is not particular to me. Is it such an enormous crime, to wish to enjoy the most lovely woman that ever Heaven formed? Were we not created for each other, intended so by nature? Is not pleasure the object of my age? and can I renounce it without insulting humanity? We may find reasons to oppose every thing, but cold reason is not virtue.

A B I L L E T

From the Chevalier de GERAC to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

YOU sigh, you blush, you are sad, you are distracted; but of what service are these warnings of a delicate sensation? and if they are not listened to by you, where is the persuasive voice that can hope to be heard?

But the season for counsels is past, and this is the time for friendship, whose office it is, to console the heart it is unable to relieve. I see you are preparing a great deal of uneasiness for yourself; and I would willingly share it, to lessen what I am sure you will feel. The effects of a virtuous education on a mind naturally good, are powerful; and if we will not suffer it to operate for our happiness, it never fails to turn to our misery. It will not permit us to stray from the right road, without setting our error before us in the

the most painful light ; and though we may return, we never can rid ourselves of the galling remembrance of having trespassed.

There is another remark which I cannot help making, though I hope it will not hold good in your case. The habitual libertine generally comes out of his excesses with less mischief, than he who, new to vice, is not so expert in ill, and consequently seldom extricates himself without occasioning some consequence more than ordinarily fatal.

LETTER XXX.

From the Duc de CLERMONT to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

WELL, was I in the right or not?
and has the ball failed of its effect?
I was sure she would scribble to you. The
way is now as smooth as a bowling-green;
things are brought to a point ; and you

have nothing to do but come to a conclusion as soon as you can, without wearying one another with a tedious preliminary.

However let me once more give you a caution not to be too prodigal of your letters. Of four that she writes you, don't answer above one ; and not too much parade of sentiment. Scold, pout, complain ; and never fail to require a justification. Women are always weak, with the pen in hand ; in writing, they let themselves be carried away ; give arms to the man that would attack them, grow familiar with the expression of tender passions, and sign their own condemnation, when they least think of it.

The King goes to-morrow to Marli, where he stays a week. I am of the voyage, and shall attend the whole time ; so I hope, at my return, to find every thing as it ought to be. Consider, here are eight mortal days that I leave you to bring your affairs to an issue, according to all the rules of the most exact decency. After that, we shall have nothing to do
but

but think of publication, which is more essential than may at first be imagined : but leave all to me. You are to be silent and discreet, and know nothing of the matter.

But what ! your Englishwoman will not receive me then ? An inhuman vixen ! Adieu.

L E T T E R X X X I .

From the Marchioness de SYRCE, to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

WHAT can you complain of ? I have given you leave to write to me ; nay, I have gone so far, as to promise to answer you ; which, perhaps, is farther than I ought to have gone ; and certainly, as far as I will go. I tell you then, you are unjust, very unjust ; and injustice is revolting. Good. But now I recollect it, I have yet another subject of anger, and still against you ! How can those things

things slip ones memory? It is, then, as much through pride as reason that I am afraid of love. The bright idea! and how extremely favourable to my character! but let that pass: it is a reproach; and I don't like to dwell upon reproaches.

A dinner, a toilet (and that same toilet is a very consequential business) at present call upon me; so that I have not time to say much. But know in general, that I have principles the world are entirely ignorant of, and an exterior which must not be confided in.

In the next place, I beg, above all things, you will never tell me again that love embellishes beauty; that it gives the eyes an expression, a charm, a witchcraft; for, in spite of so rare a discovery, my heart shall continue free; and if I was unfortunate enough to feel it otherwise but for a single day, it is not such feeble advantages would be sufficient to make me amends.

You ask, if I shall be at home this evening? Lord! Yes. I have a horrible headache,

ach, and cannot stir out. Besides, I want to scold you. I am not pleased with your letters; though I own them charming. I am angry with them. Indeed, indeed, Monsieur le Comte, I must take you to task; or you must not wander so far from the tenor of our agreement.

LETTER XXXII.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE, to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

WHAT a visit did you make me yesterday! What flights! what extravagance! Do not imagine I shall easily forget it? You dare to say you love me; but had I the weakness to believe so, (which, be assured, I have not) what should I gain but the shame of it?

You entertained me for near four hours upon my charms; the desires they created; upon the *piquant* of variety, and the pleasures of inconstancy; and all that
with

with a warmth as ill placed as your discourse.

For Heaven's sake, give me leave to ask you, what have you ever observed in my conduct to authorize such a *rodomontade*? I received the avowal of your love without anger, but I believe with a sufficient degree of coldness. One may be strict to one's duty, without ill-humour or ostentation. I am mistaken in its nature, or real virtue is mild; its enjoyments are interior, and its pleasures secret. It is true, I have returned answers to some of your letters; I thought I might venture so far; and that such a mark of my esteem for you, would augment yours for me.

The world judge unfavourably of me: I know it; and endeavour to content myself. Your sex is vain; mine envious: you never pardon refusals; every woman would please alone; and when those two motives of resentment meet, they make a noise which affects weak brains.

Such, it is true, compose the grand number: there are, however, some courageous spirits

spirits who follow their own bias, not the torrent; who take the pains to examine, believe only facts, and maintain their opinion. This is what I expected from you: but one is sometimes too sanguine!

Adieu, Monsieur le Comte: what infinite obligations should I have to you, if I needed a preservative against your singular passion! Happily for me, indeed, I do not; I say happily, because that sets bounds to my gratitude.

L E T T E R XXXIII.

From the Count of ST. ALBIN to the
Marchioness de SYRCE.

OPPRESS not an unfortunate man, who is already more miserable than you can conceive. He has displeased you; the punishment is in his heart: Could you have read what pass'd there, during the conversation yesterday, that fatal conversation, which has so much irritated you against me, you would have been convinced

eed how far I was from a design of offending.

I no longer knew what I was saying; the charm of seeing you, of hearing you speak, engrossed all my senses, and threw me into an intoxication I had never before experienced. I then said, that the mistress the most adored, would have every thing to fear, if she had you for a rival; and that change, which in love is always a crime, would cease to be one if you were the cause and the object. What would you have me say? My fate is to idolize you. Neither your injustice nor your cruelty can make me love you less.

Yet, if you knew all I have done to vanquish the ascendant you have over me, you would feel some compassion. I should inspire you with more indulgence than anger. You would not, you could not, have writ me such a letter. Unhappy as I am, your contempt was still wanting to make me completely so. Your contempt! Oh Heavens! Yet, insufferable as that may

may be, Madam, I prefer it to the doubt you seem to be in of my esteem for you.

Is it, then, really possible that you can entertain a suspicion of my esteem? of mine, who every day discover qualities in you that throw me into despair and madness, and make me see my torments without end! Would I had never beheld you! I wish . . . but pardon the transports of love, of anguish, and remorse. My trouble is extreme. Mix your sighs with mine; but let me not hear them; for if I knew a sympathetic sorrow only drew one from your breast, I could never answer for myself afterwards.

Learn, Madam, a truth, which perhaps, I ought rather to keep you in ignorance of. Your indifference is not sufficient; I have need of your aversion, your detestation, to make me able to obey you, to help me to overcome the formidable desires, the ardent passion, which you disdain to authorize.

Suffer me to wait upon you this evening. Deign to be witness of my repentance.

tance. My sorrow will melt you, if you are not quite insensible. Fear not that I shall mention to you again my wretched love. I will have the fortitude to suffer, to be silent, and submit to you, as to those celestial Intelligences whom we adore only in thought.

A B I L L E T

From the Marchioness de SYRCE to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

I ANSWERED your last letter, because I thought it the fruit of repentance ; but I find it was only that of vexation. Well, vex yourself no more, I conjure you ; drive all sadness from your heart. Though you will have it, that I allow them nothing, nobody is more sensible than I am to the vexations of my friends ; but is it not right to tell them the truth ? And if I have sometimes the courage to displease, I have always the firmness to defend them. For example, I would maintain
to

to all the world, and even against all the world, that the Count de St. Albin is one of the most reasonable gentlemen living; and yet I might say the contrary if I would, without having much to reproach myself with, on the side of veracity. But what was the matter with you yesterday? Do you know that your melancholy left a cloud behind you? I should be sorry to impute it to myself. I should be sorry—because it would be out of my power to remove it. Once more, I earnestly intreat you, have nothing for me but friendship. You cannot imagine how much I should suffer in being obliged to give you the least uneasiness: yet I was not at the play last night, after all your solicitations. Was that well done of me?

A B I L.

A B I L L E T

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Chevalier de GERAC.

I WENT yesterday evening to Madame de Syrcè's, notwithstanding all you had said to me in the morning. Our conversation was the most interesting we have had since the beginning of this unfortunate connection; and it all fell upon my heart. I never was so cast down, so thoroughly out of spirits. She took notice of it; and has gently reproached me in a note I have received from her to-day; which has only served to render me more desponding. My dear and only friend, how powerful, how persuasive is friendship, when it uses the language of virtue, without the severity! It is done! yes, should it kill me, (and I half wish it may). I am resolved to make the most cruel and painful sacrifice. Yet, courageous as I feel my heart this moment, I tremble at
the

the effort I impose upon it. But man must suffer : I will do so, and spare the tears of the two most deserving of women. I will be honest ; and guided by the counsels of my friend, I go to put myself to the test. Adieu.

LETTER XXXIV.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE to her Friend Madame BREVAL.

THIS is the tenth day that I have not seen him. I am under a dejection of mind inconceivable ; and, in a word, more dead than alive. Every thing seems to administer to my pain. I go out to look for him ; stay at home, to expect him ; write to him every hour ; and as soon as I have finished my letters, burn them. Is there not such a thing as being born under a malignant planet ? He makes me sensible of all degrees of grief. Far from being glad that I have him no longer to combat, his absence kills me. I was afraid
of

of him ; he abandons me ; and I find myself still weaker.

Good God ! if he has deceived me ; if, after all, he should have given his heart to Madame de Thèmines ! I cannot bear the thought. The more secret my jealousy, the more it tears me. It turns all its fury against me. Is it then true, that he loves another ? Oh ! my friend, I have no room to doubt it. Ten days are past without my seeing him. I have been in every house where he and Madame de Thèmines go, and have been able to find neither. They love then ; they suffice each other ; and are retired from the crowd to love better.

The Count, no doubt, thought he might humour a whim for me ; and seeing that I gave an importance to his perfidy, which he did not give it himself, he has returned to the real object of his affections. Men are inhuman ! How did I offend him, but by opposing to his pretended passion the scruples of an undebauched heart, free from

from the arts of coquetry? Surely he knows not the torments he occasions me.

My soul is inaccessible to every thing but his image. My most precious days will elapse in the langour of a passion which concentrates all my ideas, absorbs my wishes, and will warm my last sigh.

It is thus I love, and thus we ought to love. I have it from you, my friend. Love is the disgrace of the heart, when it is not the torment. Judge me then, Heavens! if excess be its excuse, I have nothing to blush for.

I renounce all the world, your friendship only excepted: into the arms of that I throw myself. There I pour my tears, repose my foibles, confide all the secrets of a heart, which, perhaps, I ought to wish all the world perfectly acquainted with. Adieu. Write to me; your letters are tender, soothing: but will they cure me? never. I should not cherish them as I do, could they, alas! snatch me from my misfortune.

LETTER XXXV.

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Chevalier de GERAC.

HEAR what I have done ; applaud the intention ; give me credit for the effort ; and place the rest to the account of fatality.

You already know the avowal I made the Marchioness ; an avowal which I had afterwards reason to believe I ought not to have hazarded. However, encouraged by the first false step, and perhaps by some marks of a favourable disposition towards me, which I fancied I perceived, I put every spring in motion, and showed all the ardor, the activity, the flattering precipitation, which announces a passion in the height of its frenzy ; a passion that masters us, and we would satisfy even at the expence of delicacy.

I soon found, however, that this manner of proceeding gave offence. In short,
nothing

nothing is more certain than that Madame de Syrcè is by no means the woman she is represented. Her letters, her conversation, breathe quite a different character. All her folly is in her head, morality alone in her heart; and it is from thence she borrows the soft eloquence, the innocent seduction that forces us to love her.

When I was convinced of this, judge of my surprise, my shame, and my remorse. I blushed at what I had done, at what I intended; and the more I discovered the perfections of that inexplicable being, the stronger grew my resolution to unwind myself from her. At length, after many fruitless attempts, which gave me infinite pain, I determined to go no more to her house; no more to write to her. I wanted to forget her; and I imagined I could do it.

I redoubled my assiduity towards Hamilton. I went to *Antuiel*. I never saw her more calm; never found her more tender. I staid with her a week; and

thought myself happy. A thousand times I had a mind to intrust her with the weakness of my late conduct, a thousand times I had a mind to confess my fault; but the fear of making her uneasy still restrained me. It might have cost her some tears; and I saw her eyes sparkling with joy. Why put a disagreeable truth in the place of a pleasing illusion; destroy an ignorance that makes a creature's felicity? I could not do it.

But see the inconsequence of man, ever in contradiction with himself! During this whole time, the idea of Madame de Syrcè never left my mind. I had some of her letters in my pocket-book. I withdrew, I know not how often, into the garden, to read and kiss them. You will say this was childish; but it was a childishness that eased my heart. And yet, I was angry with myself for it; and then I returned melancholy and in disorder to Hamilton; who took my sighs as so many marks of tenderness.

I re-

I returned to town yesterday however, certain of my triumph. Your counsels, the beauty, the goodness of the woman I had left, all fresh in my memory. I made no doubt that they had had their effect ; and felt a gaiety on the occasion, to which I had for some time been a stranger. In the evening, I went to sup at our friend the Countess's ; but there, in an instant, my scene of enchantment ended.

The first object that met my eyes was Marchioness de Syrcè. To tell you how I was struck at the sight of her, is impossible. A trembling seized my whole frame ; my heart panted ; she looked at me without any signs of anger ; but I saw a shade of sadness upon her features, which went to my soul. During supper, I endeavoured to divert her from thoughtfulness ; but in vain. Going away, I led her to her coach. I attempted at some of those excuses, and half words that come from the heart. She made me no answer. I ventured to interpret her silence ; and have just writ her a letter, the most pas-

sionate that ever was penned; full of grief, and the transports of a love that knows no bounds. It is such she inspires.

But is it not then too excessive to be durable? That tenderness which I feel for the kind creature at *Antueil* is a habit of the soul; which, no doubt, will last much longer. By Heavens! it is the most ardent of my wishes. Adieu. If you blame my conduct, my frankness, at least, has a right to your esteem.

A B I L L E T

From the Marchioness de SYRCE, to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

THE warmth of expressions is not always a proof of the truth they convey. No, Monsieur le Comte, no; I believe nothing you tell me. But why at the pains to justify yourself? You neither owe me regrets nor excuses. Your conduct appears quite natural. You
promised

promised me to moderate your ardor ; and you have kept your word. I by no means complain. Perhaps, too, you have acted in obedience to Madame de Thèmines ; and I disapprove nothing but your return to me. Don't deceive her ; deceive nobody. Nothing is so shocking as deceit ; and I shall not for the future receive your visits, to avoid giving her uneasiness. You are not so delicate ; and if I had had the misfortune to possess too soft a heart, it appears that you would have had very little of that sort of humane consideration for me. But with other women be more ingenuous. You should know the heart you attack. Without that precaution, you may be worse than indiscreet ; you run the risque of being cruel.

ANOTHER BILLET

From the Marchioness de SYRCE, to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

I CANNOT tell why, your letter this morning brings greater conviction along with it, than the one of yesterday. It is sedater ; and that may be a reason why it appears more true. I am tired of talking to you about Madame de Thèmines. But the matter then is positively decided ; and it is not she that banishes you from your friends? you swear it ; you beg me to believe it. But what will all that serve? You desire to come here ; you desire it with a degree of instance. Well, Monsieur le Comte, I shall be at home at seven o'clock this evening. I mention that hour, because I would give you sufficient time to make your visits ; and I believe you extremely occupied.

L E T.

LETTER XXXVI.

From the Marchionefs de SYRCE, to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

YOU fay my letters never contain above four lines : comfort yourself; this shall be longer by at least half a dozen. I could not answer you this morning; and sooner or later, one must answer. I had a thousand plagues : I had not sufficient time to write as I would ; and perhaps there needs more for that than you imagine.

You complain of me, of my severity, and of my reason. Well. Yes, I am reasonable; I rejoice at it; and I wish you could get over the folly of letting it vex you. But whether that reason, as you call it, be the work of reflection, or the consequence of a cold constitution, I give myself no pain to examine. Satisfied with the effect, I am indifferent as to the cause.

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I only.

I only demand quarter for my sex. Do not contest with them the possibility of resisting what they like, vanquishing what they feel, and concealing what they suffer. Those unjust creatures, men, who are unacquainted with the pain of self-denial, to whom all is permitted, and in whom love is never a crime ; those cruel men, I say, who make a business of deceit, are so accustomed to exaggerate their own sentiments, that they are incapable of conceiving the violence we do ours. I am persuaded, notwithstanding, that many women shed tears that are never seen to flow, veil under a smiling outside the most anxious troubles ; and impose laws upon themselves, in spite of the mutiny of the passions that rise against them, and the stubbornness of a heart that never submits. Will you, then, yet deny us courage? It is really monstrous !

But let me explain myself a little farther, though I am intirely disinterested in all this, and you will be much mistaken, if you apply any part of it to me. What
I have

I have said here, is the result of our conversation yesterday ; and the vague ideas of your letter this morning brought it again into my head : but, for God's sake, let us have done with the subject. I don't know why I have dwelt upon it so long ; for it puts me out of humour ; and I verily think I dislike it as much as I did the tall gentleman we supped with last night.

That man is an odious ape of the Duc de Clermont. He contradicts, pronounces, decides, praises himself, and hoots every body else. You, perhaps, think he has a soul ; a soul ! he ! how he talks of women ! I heard him tell you, that infidelity was delicious. Indeed to deceive, betray, and destroy, (for those three words are generally comprized in the other) may afford pleasure to him ; but I hope not to you. However, I must tell you, that while your oracle was giving out such laudable maxims ; while I yawned, and no body else listened to him, I remarked you with a continual smile on your countenance. You never found

fault with a word he said; and your silence had all the air of approbation.

Mankind are one. Still ready to seduce us : too dissipated to search into the truth of our characters, they think they acquit themselves by a false or interested homage, which they as easily put an end to as they offer. They think us agreeable; so far they are indulgent. They fall at our feet : but how? as those infidels who do not believe in the Divinity, but when they have need of his assistance. Their adoration is momentary; their ingratitude extreme, and their injustice never but delayed. We ought to fly them. Adieu, Monsieur le Comte.

P. S. The length of my letter startles me; but, above all, the horrid things I have said in it. You will certainly think me the most satirical creature breathing. Go, go; get you gone : you have really some acquaintance that give me but a poor opinion of your sensibility.

L E T.

LETTER XXXVII.

From the Duc de CLERMONT to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

THE voyage has been longer than I expected; but at last, here I am; and, the first thing I think of, is to inform myself of your progress, or rather triumph.

But what is the meaning of this? I hear not the least rumour. Is Paris struck dumb? I have been every where, and nothing any where but a dead silence. Surely it cannot be that your adventure is not yet terminated? I fear you have been at your sentimental trifling again; and if so, all is gone to wreck.

Yes, yes, own the truth; Madame de Syrcè has found your weak side, and made you believe what she pleased; nay, perhaps, she has carried the seduction so far as to persuade you of her virtue: she is capable of it. And you to give credit
to

to all she could say ! She'll never be at rest, if you don't take care, till she makes you in love with her ; and that will be a pretty story ! But I am come to your assistance in time ; and once more, I say, push forward ; your delicacies and ridiculous delays are good for nothing, but to lose time that might be better employed.

Why may not one boldly speak out ? Madame de Syrcè has had all the world, except you. In my own concern, I had management for her ; I was circumspect ; but your danger interests me, and her artifice raises my indignation. Pr'ythee, think of what you are about ; your own reputation ought to be dearer to you than hers ; and I would sacrifice the honour of twenty women to save that of one honest man. I press you, because I see you suffer yourself to be made the dupe of a sly minx, who only wants to entrap you ; and that you will infallibly become the laugh of the world, which I would prevent. To be laughed at, Monsieur le Comte, is never agreeable ; but I would have

have you avoid it as dangerous. There is but one step from ridicule to contempt.

And so Mademoiselle Hamilton still persists obstinately to refuse me admittance ! Well, I am sorry for it; though only on your account; however, it is a comfort to me, under my affliction, to see you in the way of becoming a false swain, and I beg you will make haste for your own satisfaction as well as mine.

One thing let me particularly recommend to you, that as soon as you are happy, I may participate in the knowledge of it; it is even essential that I should be instructed of the fact the moment it has happened. If I should not be near you, my people will leave orders to dispatch a courier with your letter. When one has a report of scandal to spread about, that relates to women, and has a solid foundation, it is impossible to be too diligent.

L E T.

LETTER XXXVIII.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE to her
Friend Madame BREVAL.

YOU know my mother is gone to her estate. It is the first time she has left me in town behind her ; but I resisted all her persuasions under pretence of business, and she gave way to me because she is good ; and is so far from suspecting the real motives of my refusal to accompany her, that I believe there is nothing less than my own avowal that could engage her to believe them.

The Count de St. Albin has kept me : but scarce was my mother departed, when I began to repent of my indiscretion, and think of nothing but the danger to which I exposed myself. Here I am alone ; alone with my weakness and my love : my heart enjoys the situation, but my reason apprehends it the more. I am unquiet to a degree. I have no longer the example of
my

my dear mother's virtue before my eyes, at once to awe and encourage me: in fine, I have no support. I wept in Madame Sancere's arms when she took her leave of me. It was at that moment the hint that menaced me, struck upon my imagination; and who can tell but my tears were ominous! Perhaps my mother may never see me again innocent.

Since she has been absent, the visits of the Count are more frequent. I often see him alone: he seems sincere, and I adore him. Oh, my friend, whither shall I fly? I must fly to break the charm that surrounds me. Can I hope to vanquish what I love, when I feel no longer any thing but the weariness of resistance? But my resolution is taken.

The Marechal de Plombieres, who is always in an ill state of health, is at his charming seat near St. Germain. He is there almost alone, and I will go and keep him company. I shall think of the Count with more pleasure when I no longer dread him. The Marechal writes me
word,

word, that there are no women with him but his sister, the duchess de Vivone. She never leaves him. I shall be quite at my liberty. I will write to you constantly; and, in the shades of solitude, perhaps shall find arms against love. I intend to leave town the day after to-morrow. I tremble to mention it to the Count de St. Albin; and I will so manage the matter, that he shall have no suspicion of it till I am gone; otherwise he would fall on his knees; I should hear his complaints, his prayers; see him uneasy, and stay where I am.

LETTER XXXIX.

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Marchioness de SYRCE.

HOW, Madam! I saw you yesterday. Your departure was resolved, and you told me nothing of it. Had I offended you? Why then was it necessary to fly me?

me? You wanted the calm of the country, and you reckon for nothing the agitation in which you leave me here!

But what right have I to question you? What right have I to complain? What have I to reproach you with, but your indifference? But, on the other hand, what reproaches have you to make me? You accuse me of being ill-humoured, passionate, little master of myself, and how should one be otherwise than ill-humoured with you? Nothing persuades, nothing can fix you; you run without cause; though gentle, you are obstinate; and with the appearance of condescension to the will of others, you never do any thing but what you like yourself. All this, Madam, is true, and yet I adore you. Such is my destiny, and your ascendant. Nay, I adore even your very faults; and were you to strive to get the better of them, I think I should hinder you if I could.

I would fain, however, develope the mystery of your journey into the country, which you thought proper to keep such a secret

secret. There was the cause then of that wonderful constraint which appeared yesterday in all your actions and discourse. How I detest that embarrassment which, when we are together, always so visibly hangs on you, and stops upon your timorous lips the avowals which, perhaps, your heart would not condemn! How I detest those secret oppositions of a mind that presents itself, and retires in the same instant! Believe me, prejudices are our enemies, our tyrants; they empoison happiness, they destroy pleasure. I brave, I renounce them then, and follow only the natural transport, that burning and blind love, which pushes back, with a fearless hand, the ill-judged bars that a delusive reason employs to controul our enjoyments.

Oh you! who possessing all the faculties of my soul, I love to distraction, while I madly complain of you, employ but half that force in favour of my passion which you so barbarously practice against it! Is it that you doubt my sincerity? Doubt then

then the existence of life, or light, or any thing the most common in nature. Yet I plead not my sincerity as a merit. I feel all, but I command nothing. When will you return? How soon? In what circumstances have you abandoned me! Your absence perhaps—but let it not be long; and that you may grant my request, forget it is I who make it.

LETTER XL.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE to her Friend Madame BREVAL.

I BOASTED of what I could do, and yet now it is done, I find it nothing. In effect, how is it possible that an absence of a few days should shake a dear and vainly combated passion? We fly a beloved object, we meet him everywhere, and his image is as dangerous as his presence.

I re-peruse his letters; I recollect every word he has ever said to me; nay, I take

take a secret pleasure in pronouncing his name, which I often do by myself, or to myself, so low that nobody can hear me. Thus he is my chief company. This place notwithstanding is delightful ; but in spite of all its charms, I seem to want every thing. In short, I know not well what I would have; but my heart always looks towards Paris.

I am extremely glad the Count is not acquainted with the Marechal. I would not for the world he could come here. Oh, my friend, what shall I do? I sought a retreat; I found it, and it increases my malady. I cannot describe to you my situation. Life itself grows a burden to me; it is a burden to me without the sight of him who is my fate; and yet it is impossible to see him, and live. I feel it. I know it. Ruin hangs over my head. At some fatal instant my resolution will fail me, and I shall be lost. Has not the excess of my folly yet deprived me of your esteem? Are you still the same tender,
com-

compassionate, forgiving friend? My heart tells me you are.

He writes me such letters, and then I am embarrassed to answer them! I begin twenty times, and am never content. The fear of betraying myself, or afflicting him, all torments me, even to the excess of his love. Adieu.

L E T T E R XLI.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE to the
Count de ST. ALBIN.

I SHALL not dwell upon the motives of my departure, Monsieur le Comte, because I cannot see what necessity there is between us for an explanation upon that subject. I shall only repeat what I have already told you, that I have felt a desire for quiet and country air; and I suppose every body is the best judge of what is necessary for them.

I must

I must now thank you for your letters, which I do very sincerely. They are my most agreeable entertainment here, to the exception of that ugly love they are full of, which I can by no means approve. However, there is no danger in paper, therefore I read them with pleasure, and they put me in no fear. I must observe to you, that every thing pleases me where I now am, and nothing frightens me, which is a great happiness.

I enjoy the most perfect liberty. The Mareschal was very glad to see me. He has no other company but some men, who come from different parts of the neighbourhood, and the duchess his sister.

I don't believe you know the Duchess. She has the asthma, which renders her the most peevish creature in the world; and she does nothing all day but contradict me with the little breath she has to spare. She is always praising the women of her younger days; and that panegyric is meant as an oblique satire upon those of the present time. But I am complaisant,

plaisant at present, (too much so perhaps) and let her say what she will. In the evenings we play at *Comète*. Her luck is prodigious, and I always lose. That attention seems to disarm her ; and I am one of her greatest favourites—at *Comète*.

This *chateau* enjoys the most celestial situation in the world. Was I to attempt a description of it, my letter would have the air of a fairy tale. Sometimes it is Nature, adorned by the hand of man, and embellished with all the riches of art. Sometimes it is the same Nature abandoned to her own wantonness and caprice. The water, which, in the generality of our parks, is gathered into narrow basons, is here a river that crosses the gardens, and upon it are gondolas in which we take the air. I must not forget a labyrinth that is almost magical ; nothing less than my prudence is necessary to keep me from going astray in it. All the flowers of spring and summer grow there in a number of enamelled carpets, and one would think that all the birds of song assembled by agree-

ment in the trees overhead, which spread a shade impervious to the hottest sun. In crossing the walks, you here and there meet with a serpentine stream, that runs clear as crystal over a bed of coloured sand, and murmuring among a thousand little shining pebbles, makes a melancholy music altogether delicious. The Marschal has placed many statues up and down, but they represent nothing but fictions; for they are all females that yield, and I don't like that. They consecrate our foibles; but where are the monuments to our virtue? It is the fault of men, not ours.

But where was I? The thread of my narrative has slipped from me, and I know nothing at all of the matter. Oh! at the statues!—and from thence we came to the charming grotto that terminates the labyrinth. Here, when one enters, one appears to be separated from the rest of the universe; and it is my favourite retreat about sun-set. I never fail to go there. I walk upon roses; I am covered with roses.

I feel

I feel a sort of ravishment ; and, when I come out again, it is as from a dream, from which I am angry to be awakened.

And now I talk of dreams, I must tell you one I had last night, which I attribute to the volatile ideas that busy my thoughts during the day. I imagined I was in a shady arbor. I thought of a thousand things. I made reflections, and at last I wished for a Sylph ; but a real Sylph (don't misunderstand me) immediately appeared. He issued from a golden cloud ; his vestments were azure, and his figure such as I shall never forget : his looks were full of tenderness, not of restless ardour ; the sound of his voice went to the heart : he asked nothing but what I might grant ; he only desired to love. He began to entertain me with an account of the manners of the Sylphs, and the chastity of their passions. I think he even spoke ill of men. I listened to him ; I heard him with pleasure ; when one of my women came to wake me. Adieu, my Sylph ; and I promise you, I regretted him.

P. S. You ask how soon I shall return to Paris. I don't know myself. . . . Is it not a strange thing that I shall never make you reasonable?

LETTER XLII.

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Chevalier de GERAC.

I HAVE conceived a design of the most bold and singular nature. I cannot live without seeing the Marchioness. My conduct may be indiscreet, but the excess of my trouble justifies it. It is impossible that Madame de Syrcè can really be what she affects to appear to me : she would be too adorable ; and it is impossible that I should longer bear the passion to which I am a prey. I would rather hazard her displeasure, and am determined to run the risk.

You know my heart ; it is weak, warm, and violent in its inclinations and desires.

I must

I must then satisfy my propensity. I shall repent; I have no doubt I shall be mad with myself; but I act under a fatality not to be resisted. Prepare me, friend; prepare for me all your consolation.

LETTER XLIII.

From the Count de ST. ALBIN to the
Chevalier de GERAC.

NEVER pronounce her name again, but with respect; to do otherwise is blasphemy. I adore, I idolize her; my enthusiasm survives a happiness of which I had no idea. I know not where I am. How shall I paint my transports, or describe to you a scene where heaven itself seems to have been open to my view?

My journey yesterday was to the chateau of the Marechal de Plombieres, where my charmer is at present on a visit. She writ me word that the night before she had had a dream, in which she thought she saw one of those fantastic beings pro-

duced by the delicate imagination of women. And it is to this dream owe——

But let me begin my narrative regularly; and yet when I have begun, how shall I proceed? how finish it? The recollection of the circumstances alone set me all on fire, and, as it were, deprive me of myself.

I left Paris at three o'clock in the afternoon, and reached St. Germain's before six, where I left my carriage. From thence I walked to the chateau. I enquired for the head gardener. I asked him if it was possible to see Madame de Syrcè. He told me she walked every evening in the labyrinth, and that she was then there. I desired him to conduct me to her. He made difficulties. I told him I had some papers to deliver to her of consequence, and that could be put in no hands but her own. He talked of my going round to the front of the chateau, and sending my name from the porter's lodge. In a word, nothing could prevail on him, till I gave him a purse in which were five-and-

twenty

twenty louis d'ors, and every thing was immediately settled to my wishes. He followed me to the entrance of the labyrinth, gave me a key, and left me.

Judge of my joy! I thought myself transported under another climate. I knew not on which side to turn, and my eyes distinguished nothing. I sought Madame de Syrcè.

As I advanced in the Dedalèan maze, I trembled at every step. At length, after many windings, I heard a noise. My breath grew short and violent. What a moment! What an object, through a little opening in a hedge of myrtles! I discovered my charmer reading a letter; and that letter was one of mine. The Marchioness, who thought herself alone, had that negligence in her adjustment which is permitted to the most delicate, when they are sure they have no witnesses.

I was in an ecstasy! My eyes devoured her; and, enraptured by what I saw, I feared to lose something by daring at more. I grew bolder. However, I putting back the branches that hid me from
her

her sight, stood in full view before her. She screamed ; her trembling hand let fall the letter which she held ; and her disorder was so great, that resting motionless, she did not even think of composing the disorders of her dress. Delightful forgetfulness, for which I return thanks to Love !

Fear nothing, cry'd I, (throwing myself at her feet) I am the lover you dream'd of ; but a lover the most submissive, the most respectful, the most tender. I adore you as my divinity ! I am come to tell you so, and repeat it to you a thousand times. O God ! cry'd she, with a trembling voice, is it an illusion ? am I awake ? or do I now dream indeed ? No, answered I, it is all reality ; in me you behold your Sylph, my life, my angel ! Desire is dumb before you ; your beauty enflames ; but delicacy enchains it.

At these words she rose, snatched her hand, which I held, out of mine, and forbid me to follow her. But how could I obey ? I stopp'd her. Gracious Heaven, exclaimed she, what will become of me !

Be-

Begone, Count, begone. What has brought you here? How have you gain'd admittance? Cruel! Have you a mind I should hate you?

She fell pale, and without force, upon a bed of violets, towards which I had led her. In her eyes was painted fear, but not aversion. I sat down by her, and gently raising her in my arms, and resting her languishing head upon my bosom, Calm yourself, said I; it is not an enemy that comes to surprize you; it is a lover that would die ten thousand deaths to procure you a moment's happiness. She trembled, she sighed; her eyes were turned from me; the motion of her breast became more rapid. Not knowing what I did, I pressed my lips burning upon hers.

Every thing favoured me. Night began to descend upon the mysterious shade. I was passionate, I grew still more pressing. Her terror was mixed with an emotion full of charms; and, even in her prayers, there was something touching that increased my flame. I saw nothing
but

but her ; I heard nothing—but the voice of love.

The occasion, the place ; her astonishment, the obscurity, insured my triumph. I dared to profit of so many advantages united. I dared, (and perhaps her heart pardons me) I dared all. A covering of verdure wrapt modesty : the Sylph became a man, and the man a god !

I was obliged too soon to retire. In spite of all my efforts to retain her ; in spite of all the submission of happy love, which though anxious to be yet more happy, accused itself for what it had already enjoyed ; in spite of the repentance with which her visible concern and consternation had struck me, even in the moments of ecstasy, she broke from my arms, silent, despairing, and bathed in tears. You may judge of her power, for she over-ruled the violence of my still-burning passion. I followed her for some time through the obscurity ; and though objects were no longer distinguishable, thought I saw her still.

I do

I do not recommend this secret to you. I know a caution of that kind needless; and it would be, in fact, an insult. But it is to you alone I confide it; to you in the universe. My felicity is too complete; and I am too sensible of it to need the cold pleasure of boasting.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.